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AN ETHICAL STUDY OF THE CHURCH OF ROME

BY

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PREFACE

THE following chapters embody the material of a series of lectures which were delivered under the auspices of the Union of Ethical Societies at its central lecture hall. The aim of the lectures was to acquaint a body of sympathetic outsiders with the methods and institutions which the Church of Rome employs, as a result of its long experience, in the cultivation of the ethical ideal and the moral life. The spirit of the work is therefore rather appreciative than critical, though the chief purpose is the mere presentation of Catholic life. I must also warn those who may glance casually at the following pages that, although I have thought it of interest to point out such parallels in non-Christian religions as lay within my knowledge, there is no pretension whatever to completeness in this respect.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

ONE of the most singular features of the advance of man's thoughts and institutions is the wave-movement which we discern in almost every branch of his spiritual life. Mental and moral progress does not present the even flow of a great river through the domain of history. It is marked by a series of leaps and rebounds; it advances up the shore of life by successive waves that sweep and curl with irresistible power for a moment, then tumble into impotent confusion, and recede once more into the deep. So it has been with the advance of the highest human disciplines. In religion we have the venerable and luxurious growth of the Persian cult, the Hindoo cult, the Chinese, Judaic, and Christian cults, coming to an abrupt close (in whole or in large part) in the impassioned plea for a return to primitive simplicity —more purely and more nobly conceived—of a

Zarathustra, a Buddha, a Kung-Tse, a Christ; and the death of each reformer becomes in turn the root of another elaborate growth. In philosophy we have the early Greek wave ending in the scepticism of the immediate forerunners of Socrates: then a second superb wave of philosophic thought breaking up in the scepticism of the Academics: the intense activity of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries subsiding in the scepticism of the fourteenth; the great movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries closing in a weary Pyrrhonic smile. In education we find the elaborate system of ancient Rome again taking shape in the nineteenth century. In art the wave-movement is patent enough. In the great art of living strong voices are pleading for a return to simpler ways. In medicine, politics, warfare the movement is not wholly wanting.

It would seem that this strange law of advance by succeeding crests holds good also in the domain of ethics: that the world is undoing the long and fateful alliance of ethics and religion in preparation for a fresh spurt of moral progress. There was a time when the notion of divorcing ethics from theology (or theological religion) bore the taint of sacrilege. The decalogue was as truly and vitally a part of the primitive revelation as the most transcendental of dogmas. But modern anthropological research has put a different complexion on the alliance of morality and religion. Ages before the time when the Israel-

ites crossed the Arabian desert, the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Assyrians were familiar with the ten commandments. Ages before the earliest bricks and papyri that we have were entrusted with their precious messages in Egypt and Chaldæa, our Aryan ancestors had an advanced ethical code as well as a theology. What a wealth of moral feeling one can discern behind the simple words for father, mother, brother, and sister, which are common to the Aryan nations, and recall the far-off life of that wonderful race on some broad Asiatic plain! Moral law precedes by countless ages all the bibles in which it is formulated. Indeed, it is the conviction of most of our leading anthropologists that, in the beginning, religion had, as Professor Tiele says, "little or no connection with morality." In the Ethical Movement of modern times we see an approach to the completion of the circle. Side by side with the Churches in England, France, Germany, and the United States there are national ethical movements, branches of a great international movement, for the cultivation of moral life and moral science without reference to theology. Whilst Churches contend for the safety of their foundations against the advancing tide of historical, scientific, and philosophic research, a not inconsiderable body has been formed for the erection of a structure of moral life and moral theory on the unchanging and imperishable foundation of our rational nature and our social life. Here are facts which

afford a basis secure from all inroad of scepticism; and on it a stately structure has already arisen under the labour of many hands — M. Arnold, G. Eliot, Huxley, Mill, Spencer, Clifford, L. Stephen, Lecky, Sidgwick, Harrison, Muirhead, Seeley, Morley, and so many others, to speak of England alone.

But when the fair proportions of this humanist temple caught the attention of observers in the nineteenth century, it was exposed to many charges. Chief of these were two strictures which would destroy each other if they had force enough. The one said that this new temple of humanity would not attract men from the lower ways of life, or would not influence, if it attracted them. The other complained that the new structure was taken piece by piece from demolished Churches: had borrowed all its fine lessons and its moral force from Christianity. The first point might be met with an impressive *solvitur ambulando.* The second point is chiefly noticeable for its naïve conceit in wearing the appearance of a complaint at all. One might, indeed, make a friendly retort that, if modern humanism has borrowed much from Christianity, it has returned not a little. The most exalted preachers of the Christian faith, such as St. Augustine and St. Bernard, have presented it at times in forms that repel even the modern theologian. It may be said that they saw the teaching of Christ through the mists of their respective ages. But what has dissi-

pated those mists and quenched the fires of the Vatican and of Smithfield, and forced the theologian to purify his image of the deity, if it be not the penetration of modern humanism into the sanctuary? However, one would rather meet the objection with an expression of surprise at its censorious tone. Why should we not borrow moral inspiration from Christianity? Why may we not wander at will through the historic ethical structures which the Churches are, and gather the many lessons afforded by their age-long experience of moral culture? Why are we expected, and why should we be disposed, to sweep into Lethe all the forms in which man's striving for the higher life has embodied itself during æons of effort? Just as the political reformer seeks guidance and, it may be, inspiration in the history of dead polities and in the myriad living polities about him, so does the wise ethical statesman weigh the vast experience which is enshrined in the Churches and religions of the world. Mr. Mallock and all those who would discover only the oil of Christianity in the lamps of the modern moralists do but testify that the instinctive revulsion of the emancipated has been wisely controlled.

And when the mind enters upon this impartial quest of moral experience, it is at once arrested by the ethical structure of the Church of Rome. No other religion has ever fashioned so vast, so elaborate, and so firm an ethical discipline as that historic

Church. Nay, there is hardly a point of moral discipline in any other religion which has not been found for centuries in that greatest of the Christian bodies. The silent prayer of the Quaker, the revival exercises of the Methodist, the thrilling symbolism of the Baptist, the organisation of the Anglican, and the sensuous ritual of the Russian, all have their places in its structure. The severe sacerdotalism of Mexico and Peru, the mystic and æsthetic ceremonies of Greece, the graduated commandments of Buddhism, the higher ethical culture of the Confucians, the grave other-worldliness of Egypt, and the administrative ability of Rome still live in its world-wide organisation. One has only to glance at its history to realise its wealth. We may see the foundations of its structure laid in Babylon 2,500 years ago, when Judaic fervour encountered the elaborate religions of the older Semitic civilisations. From Jerusalem it passes—perhaps with an infusion of Buddhist ethics—to Alexandria, the spiritual centre of the world, where the riches of Greece and of Egypt are added to it. From Alexandria it is transferred to Rome, become in its turn the centre and focus of civilisation. At Rome it gathers the wealth of the half-dozen great religions—those of Mani, Mithra, Isis, and so on—over whose ruins it pushes its ever-widening walls. For ten centuries, at least, it is enriched with the devoted labours of

nearly every great mind and great heart in Europe. Assuredly a religion to be studied by the moralist—by the man who can pick out the golden grains of ethical experience from the accumulation of errors and anomalies and crudities.

Folly without equal, says the critic, to suppose that you can transfer this structure, or any notable part of it, from its supernatural to a natural basis: to think that you can find a support in the facts of this life for a structure that has pledged its whole effectiveness on the reality of a life beyond. That is an objection which one could meet more effectively at the close of our examination of the Roman ethical system, but we may submit even now two considerations which go far towards removing it, without penetrating deeply into theological controversy. And firstly, the ethical structure of the Church of Rome is less exclusively grounded on supernatural postulates than men imagine. The practical discipline of the Church is based on its theory of morals, or its moral theology. Now, the moral theology of the Church of Rome—one may almost say the only moral theology ever framed in scientific form—is perilously humanist and "naturalist." The Catholic theologian does *not* teach the notion vulgarly attributed to him, that this or that is sinful because God has forbidden it; on the contrary, he says, God has forbidden it because it is immoral,

inherently and essentially.[1] Morality he defines as a law flowing from the very nature of a rational being. Sin he describes as *either* an outrage of the divine prerogatives *or* an outrage of one's own rational nature or of the well-being of other men. No doubt it is quickly added that God has enforced this natural law, and strengthened its frail dominion by identifying it with His will. But the bases of a natural system of ethics are given, and in truth the moral theologian employs these rational principles of morality far more extensively than he uses scriptural texts in the construction of his system. After a study of Catholic moral theology one is disposed to think that the whole of its purely theological supports might be removed without danger of collapse, just as the builder dislodges his temporary wooden frame when the arch has sufficiently hardened above it.

Like theory, like practice. The complex ethical discipline which the priest, like the theologian, has erected over the simple teaching of the Gospels bears no obvious marks of a supernatural origin. Rather does it attract and win our sympathy for the human effort that is writ so large upon it. Let me introduce the matter with an historical illustration.

[1] I have before me one of the most approved modern treatises of moral theology, that of Father Lehmkuhl, S.J., which does not pretend to originality in presenting general principles. Father Lehmkuhl says (p. 125) that from the natural (*i.e.* moral) law "not even God can dispense: for God can neither grant license to commit a moral evil, nor by His will deprive of its immoral character that which is intrinsically evil."

When, in the fourth century, the Christians issued from their hiding-places and found leisure to examine their rivals, they were greatly disconcerted by the resemblance of Mithraist and other pagan ceremonies to their own. On the Vatican, for instance, Constantine's new basilica had for near neighbour a great Mithraic antrum, where gorgeously attired priests consecrated sacred cakes, amidst the blaze of candles and the fumes of incense, and communicated them to baptised and deeply earnest worshippers as the body of their "Saviour" and "Good Shepherd" Mithra. But the rivals were crushed, and the memory of their diabolical imitation of Christianity died away. By the Middle Ages there was a universal feeling of the sacred uniqueness of the Christian cult and discipline. Then there came another severe shock to the nerves of the faithful. In the sixteenth century Fernando Cortes and Pizarro penetrated into the interior of America, and Spanish missionaries accompanied or followed them with the gifts of the Catholic faith. Up to the year 1520 the Spaniards had been acquainted only with the uncivilised inhabitants of the coast and the islands. It was, therefore, with an almost paralysing bewilderment that the Spaniards gazed on the elaborate religion and civilisation of the Toltecs and Aztecs. One of the first things to catch the eye of those who were bringing the symbol of redemption from Europe was the cross of gold that already glittered on the roofs of many of the

Mexican temples. They were anticipated—clearly by the devil, they said, reverting to the old patristic theory. And when they came to learn the details of the Mexican religion they felt that no cunning less than that of the great archangel could have devised so close an imitation of the true faith. A stern and sombre priesthood, largely celibate, anointed with oil and blood after severe mental and moral preparation, ministered to the religious needs of the people. Each town was divided into parishes with temples and clergy, and day by day they went about in their sober black and their flowing mantles; hearing the confessions of the aged, and imposing penance and giving absolution in the name of their god; communicating the sick from the consecrated cakes or dough images of their deity, which made them "eaters of god"; rising at night from their scanty sleep to sing their sacred canticles. On the great festivals the sober black was exchanged for gorgeous vestments, and they led solemn processions, with banners flying, to the sacred temples. They had hospitals for the sick, they baptised the infants, married the youths and maidens, and committed the dead to their last rest with becoming ceremony. They had a perfect organisation, crowned by a supreme priest, "the Mexican lord of sacred things." There were monasteries and nunneries, too, where youths and maidens pledged themselves for life to continence, asceticism, and prayer. Entering one of

these convents, you would find the nuns occupied just as they are in England to-day, teaching their girl-pupils, embroidering linen for the altar and vestments for the priests, and making the sacred cakes for communion. Finally, there was the Thebaid of Mexico, where hermits wrestled with the spirit in solitude under the inspiration of a yet higher call.[1]

Probably the pious Spaniards were little moved when, ten years later, the missionary companions of Pizarro returned from Peru with a similar story. We know now, at all events, that the two religions had a common source, probably in the older religion of the Mayas of Central America; and it is by no means impossible to conceive this earlier cult as a development of the native animistic religions of the continent. But Christianity had hardly recovered from the shock of the American discovery when, in 1581, it was apprised of a similar discovery in the heart of China. There had been earlier missions to China, but they had had little success. In 1581 the Jesuit Ricci and his enterprising comrades were able, by a pious stratagem, to enter fully into the life of the people. Here, again, were found an elaborate ritual, priesthood, and moral discipline. Taoist and Buddhist priests ministered incessantly in the temples, and often in the domestic shrines, or led

[1] I take the details from Réville's *Histoire des réligions*, a critical source. There have been several attempts to detect an importation from the Old World in the American religions, but Professor Tiele and other experts ridicule the idea.

stately processions to the temples, the tonsured priests swinging their censers and bearing lighted tapers and banners, and aspersing the crowds with holy water or extending their hands in benediction over them. They had "the cross, the mitre, the dalmatic, the cope, the rosary, celibacy, spiritual retreats, the cult of saints and relics, fasts, litanies," etc. (Réville). Monasteries abounded, in which shaven monks chanted, in alternate choirs, their monotonous psalms in a dead language, and held out a mendicant palm, and genuflected before the images and the altars. The people venerated their dead, flocking to the cemeteries on "all souls' day;" the children had a festival in honour of their guardian spirits. It was all very uncanny, and Rome promptly put on the Index a work in which the Jesuit missionary described his experiences, though they were accompanied with the usual explanations.

The modern world does not take kindly to the theory of diabolical anticipation. It appeals to the science of comparative religion. From that we learn something of the origin of those ethical institutions, or ritual practices with an ethical force, which are common (though in such diverse degrees of purity and effectiveness) to Rome and other religions. The astronomer can depict for us the growth of a solar system from a formless nebula, because he finds amongst the millions of heavenly bodies around us models that illustrate every step

or phase in the development. So the ethnologist and the student of comparative religion arrange for us the amazing variety of the forms of religion we are acquainted with, in actual life or in history, until the eye can sweep with comparative security from the formless nebula of the religious and moral feeling of the Hottentot or the Esquimaux to the elaborate disciplines of Buddhism and Catholicism. Unfortunately, there is as yet no science of comparative ethics. The ethical student must follow humbly in the steps of the comparative theologian, and gather up his parenthetic observations on the ethical disciplines he finds associated with the cults and legends of the nations. "The two vast united provinces of Morals and Law," says Mr. Tylor, "have been as yet too imperfectly treated on a general ethnographic scheme to warrant distinct statements of results"; but he acknowledges that where the field has been even superficially explored "every glimpse reveals treasures of knowledge."[1]

A broad survey of the condition of the tribes which still linger in the moral abysses from which we have arisen yields the interesting result that they are actually engaged in composing a

[1] *Primitive Culture.* As contributions to the subject one may notice: A. Wuttke's *Geschichte des Heidenthums in Beziehung auf Religion*, T. Elsenhans's *Wesen und Entstehung des Gewissens*, O. Flügel's *Das ich und die sittlichen Ideen im Leben der Völker*, A. Bastian's *Zur ethnischen Ethik* and *Die Rechtsverhältnisse bei verschiedenen Völker der Erde*, P. Rée's *Die Entstehung des Gewissens.*

decalogue, or were so engaged when missionaries and travellers first penetrated their narrow worlds. Amongst the Esquimaux of the North, the islanders of the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, the aborigines of Australia and Africa, the pre-Aryan tribes to the north and south of India, and the lower American races, moral law was slowly, but surely, forcing itself upon the mind before the first Christian missionary arrived. The Esquimaux are amongst the least religious races of the earth, yet many tribes of them have taken to heart several of the commandments in a manner which no civilised nation could hope to rival. Elie Reclus (*Primitive Folk*) tells that when the Russian missionaries reached them they honestly declared that Christianity would only lead to their moral deterioration ; the Danish missionaries, more honest still, returned to labour in their own country. The wretched Veddahs of Ceylon practised a rare and exemplary monogamy ; the Khonds would die rather than lie ; the native Australian would on no account marry a woman of his own clan ; many of the Pacific Islanders and most of the Red Indians had shamed themselves out of cannibalism before the white man's gospel reached them. Ethnology opens to us nature's great ethical school, where we find tribe after tribe deciphering one or other precept of the complete ethical code, each according to its temper, its environment, and its social needs. Morality with them means " social pressure," says

Professor E. Caird. Where the primitive war with nature and with one's fellows is still the chief feature of life, as with the Red Indians, unwavering fierceness and endurance are the great virtues. Where agriculture makes its mute appeal for peace the moral code is reversed. Each tribe and race contributes its line to the finished code of the higher nations.

And when we pass from the non-ethical (savage) religions to the ethical (civilised and semi-civilised) —and it must be remembered that this transition antedates every alleged positive revelation by ages, so that they cannot be invoked to effect it—we find the continued advance of conscience. The history of the higher religions presents a remarkable drama. The moral sense continues to advance rapidly, in spite of the confining bonds of sacred formularies, and religions rise and fall before its irresistible march. In Greece the great poets voice the finer protest against the sluggish progress of religion. In China a Kung-Tse or a Lao-Tse insists on the sovereignty of ethics. In India the Buddha (no matter if he merely personify an ethical movement, as Tiele says) triumphs over formalism and insincerity. In the earlier texts of the Avesta (espesially in the Gathas) we trace the reform attributed to Zarathustra. In the Old Testament we have the voices of the prophets. Even in the bloody and inhuman religion of the Aztecs in Mexico we find

the inevitable utterance of a moral protest before the Spaniards arrive. Nietzalhuatcoyotl, the Mexican Solomon, who died in 1472, built a great temple to the supreme God, from which the human sacrifices and hideous images of the popular cult were excluded, and only flowers and perfumes were offered. Morality runs a race with religion for the higher goal, and the play of their respective advances forms a wonderful drama.

Thus we trace the ethical ideal working with tremendous energy in the world's religions, and guiding the hereditary transmission of their spiritual treasures, as they sink one by one into the tomb of history. The religions of Babylon and Nineveh, of Thebes and Memphis, of Tyre and Antioch, of Athens and Rome, of Teuton and Celt, pass away under the despotic law. But the same ethical spirit, the same vague striving after a higher ideal, that had evoked them from the earlier chaos of animist or physical religion, sees to it that the lessons of their thousand years of moral administration are not cast to the winds. In the Buddhist, the Christian, and the Moslem temple we must seek the spiritual heirs of the dead, the breath of the immortal soul that lived in each in turn. Strip them of their myths, their legends, or their dogmas; pierce through the system of worship which rests on those dogmas; and you have left the moral code which humanity has so slowly written, and the vast structure of ethical dis-

cipline by which it has learned to enforce that code.

Such is the spirit in which the ethical student approaches the ethical discipline of the Church of Rome. That Church professes a dual object—to promote the worship of God and to ensure the salvation (by sanctification) of the souls of men : to guard the faith and protect the morals of its followers. If there are those who can close their eyes to the truth or untruth of its dogmas (and even, at times, of its ethics), and enter with sympathy into its æsthetic charm, it is surely possible to set aside the theological aspect for an hour and study the wonderful embodiment of moral effort which we may call its ethical discipline. Errors there may be in plenty—aye, even fraud, compromises with æsthetic feeling or political ambition—but there must be, not only deep interest for the psychologist, but even large utility to the moralist, who will approach its ethical system with insight and sympathy. Each part of its structure has been elaborated in great wealth of detail, and our inquiry must omit no point of ethical significance. Moreover, each institution must be studied, not only in the purity of its theory, but as it is sustained in the frail efforts of living men. The partisan may restrict himself to either : the humanist must study both.

CHAPTER II

THE PRIEST AND THE PEOPLE

THERE is a pretty and effective piece of symbolism in the ceremony of initiation into the clergy of the Roman Church. The aspirant, who is most probably a youth of sixteen or seventeen years, kneels before his bishop at the altar, and is shorn of five locks of hair, whilst he repeats after the prelate the words: "The Lord is the part of my inheritance." By this ceremony, and the tonsure which perpetually recalls it to him, he is set apart from the body of the people (λαος, laity). He has chosen the service of the temple as his portion (κληρος) in life, and belongs henceforth to what the Church calls its clerics (κληρικοι) or clergy. He has for the first time crossed by proper right, and not by the mere requirement of modern services, the sacred line of the sanctuary. From that day he will ascend from grade to grade. He will be in turn—even in the haste of modern priest-making the gradation is preserved in form—doorkeeper to the temple, reader of the Scriptures, exorcist of evil spirits, and acolythe, or

immediate server at the altar. In his twenty-first year he enters the closer circle of the greater orders, from which none may return. After an impressive warning from the bishop he advances to the step of the altar, and by that simple, silent act assumes the most sacred obligation never again to look with desire on the love and gladness of earth. At twenty-two he becomes a deacon, with power to touch the holy vessels. Two years afterwards he is admitted, in a long and elaborate ceremony, to the supreme office of the priesthood.

No doubt there seems at first a certain incongruity in the idea of a priest (πρεσβυτερος = elder) of four-and-twenty years. The solution is found in the early confusion and ultimate rearrangement of clerical offices in the early Church. The "presbyter" was not a priest at all, in the modern sense of the term, in the first century. He was one of a council of the elders of the Christian community—a familiar institution in the Judaic religion, from which it was borrowed—who were charged with the administration of the more secular affairs of the Church. The real priests of the early Church were far from being advanced in age. The St. John of the Gospels is little more than a youth; the other apostles have a long subsequent career. And when the Church grew, it was the newly created bishops (ἐπισκοποι = overseers) and deacons (διακονοι = assistants)—whether they were identical or no is disputed—who were called into

the ministry of the gospel and the cultus. But these must have been frequently taken from the presbyters, and in the course of time the latter name clung to the sacerdotal order which sprang up between the bishops and the deacons, as the one class ascended and the other descended the forming hierarchic scale.

And it is a fact of some significance that we find the Roman practice in the most widely separated religions. One is disposed at first to expect that the priests of a religion will be in literal truth the "elders" of the community. So serious a responsibility lies on them, in the religious theory, that the gravity of age may well be thought a first qualification for the priestly charge. The truth is that religions which seem to attach importance to such a qualification are comparatively rare, whilst we find in the most distant parts of the earth the practice of setting apart youths at an early age. The ancient Jewish custom is familiar enough; and other Semitic nations had in their temples boys who were destined for the priesthood. In ancient Mexico boys were chosen from the sacerdotal or monastic schools for the purpose, and put through a severe mental and moral training. They had many examinations to pass, and had to spend long periods in the inspiring solitude of the mountains and the deserts before they were admitted to sacerdotal functions amongst the grave and austere Mexican clergy. But even

farther away from all contact with Semitic or Latin nations, amidst the gloomy ice-fields of the Arctic Circle, we find an analogous proceeding, marked by similar abuses to those of the old Babylonian religion.[1] The finer boys amongst the Western Inoits (near Alaska) are marked out at an early age for such priesthood as the Esquimaux religion possesses; sometimes, indeed, parents are asked for the child long before birth, and they apply themselves in their rude way to a serious pre-natal education of their infant. In his youth the candidate prepares himself rigorously for his functions, by long fasts, severe endurance, and days and nights of solitary contemplation amongst the wild and thrilling scenery of the North; and he is still in his early manhood when he begins to be consulted as an *angakok*, or "ancient."

There is, perhaps, no page in the whole captivating volume of comparative religion of greater interest to the ethical student than that which deals with the infinite variety of priesthoods. It is sometimes said that even advanced religions like the national religion of China have no priests, but the statement is misleading. The emperor sacrificing in the temple of the sun, and the head of the family sacrificing to the shades of its ancestors in the domestic shrine, are real priests, and have had to prepare themselves morally with more or less rigour for the ceremony. Moreover, the presence of myriads

[1] Elie Reclus, *Primitive Folk*, chap. ii.

of Buddhist and Taoist priests all over China meets the natural impulse to create a clergy. The Chinese family frequently hires a Taoist priest to perform its devotions, and whole districts subscribe for public ceremonies to be conducted by the same or by Buddhist priests. There is hardly a religion known without priests of some rudimentary character; and almost everywhere the priest, or sorcerer, or medicine-man, or whatever name he may deserve, distinguishes himself from the *laos*, or general community, by a special training and by certain burdens and privileges. In the Church of Rome we find a system of training in which the sacerdotal disciplines of the world are gathered up and purified by the higher European intelligence. Once more, its system represents the finished type of which the systems of other religions are rude and nebular adumbrations.

The training of the Catholic priest usually commences in his early teens. There are, indeed, cases of even a pre-natal preparation, like that of the simple Esquimaux. Many a mother has consecrated her child to the priesthood before he was born, for the average Catholic family of any fervour is ambitious to have a son in the service of the altar. But rarely is even a moral pressure exerted on the boy. The choice must be spontaneous. And so some day in his thirteenth or fourteenth year the boy conceives a vague ambition to stand at the

altar, or he is subtly inoculated by others with such ambition, and he is despatched to the seminary.[1] Unless a diocese is heavily pressed by a lack of clergy, two conditions are rigorously laid down for admission to the seminary: exceptional moral disposition and at least a fair intelligence. Poverty is not an insuperable difficulty, since the more wealthy Catholics contribute freely towards the education of their clergy. The candidate is then initiated into a severe mental and moral training, which is to last until his twenty-third or twenty-fourth year. With his mental training I have little concern here, since I am regarding the priest solely in his ethical function. The ideal aimed at in the seminary is to devote three or four years to literary and historical education, together with some training in science and mathematics; the name of more than one Jesuit scientist will occur to the reader in illustration of the thoroughness of even the preparatory education in some seminaries. Two years are then devoted to the study of the Scholastic Philosophy, with discreet allusions to antagonistic systems of metaphysics and ethics (for moral philosophy, or a natural and entirely non-scriptural study of ethical problems, forms the third and last part of the course). The next three, four, or five years (according to the

[1] I am dealing exclusively with the secular, or non-monastic, priest here. The tenth chapter will deal with regular, or monastic, clergy.

pressure of circumstances) are devoted to the study of Scripture, Canon Law (to a slight extent), and Theology. The greater part of the student's time is occupied with moral principles and problems (moral theology and casuistry) in these last years of preparation. The chief institution through which the priest is to discharge his ethical function is the confessional, and for this he undergoes an elaborate preparation. I have already said a word of the character of this moral theology. It is formally grounded on Scripture and the moral decisions of the Church, but the bulk of the two great quarto volumes which usually convey it to the student is taken up with a purely rational discussion of ethical principles and practical problems.

Side by side with this training of the mind, the moral education of the youth proceeds with some rigour. The chapel, not the lecture-room, is the heart of the seminary. The students are early educated into the practice of silent meditation on moral and religious subjects, and the first hour of the day is invariably devoted to this and to attendance at Mass. Spiritual works are read to them during meals and probably at other hours, and the lives of the saints and other religious books are forced upon them. Every Saturday they confess to one of the priests, usually an elderly priest of experience and exceptional spirituality; every Sunday and festival, if not more frequently, they communicate. The

Church law of fasting (after the age of twenty-one) and abstinence from flesh-meat on certain days and for certain periods is enforced as far as health permits; and once a year all studies are suspended for a week and the whole attention is given to a moral review of the preceding twelve months (with, perhaps, a general confession) and a course of purely religious exercises and meditations. There are few who are not deeply impressed during the services of the annual retreat. The silent concentration for days together on the Christ-ideal and the basic thoughts of Christianity soon imparts a quality of profound earnestness to every face, and leaves an impress on the life of the community for weeks to come.

I will not discuss here the circumstances which interfere with the fulfilment and effectiveness of this educational ideal in divers ways.[1] However the system may be abridged, or indiscreetly applied, or prematurely concluded, the young men who emerge from the sanctuary in their early twenties usually bear with them a high ethical ideal as well as a preparation for ceremonial duties. The oil and chrism which the bishop has poured on their hands is no mechanical rite to them. It is the moving symbol of a consecration which will survive many a rude

[1] For this the reader may, if he chooses, consult my *Twelve Years in a Monastery*. Here I would abstain from criticism as far as my chief purpose allows.

contact with the world. One by one the Catholic worshippers will kneel and kiss the anointed hands when the ceremony is over; the memory of a mother's reverent kiss on the open hands, as she knelt before her son after his ordination, is one that no struggle with the beating waves of life will ever efface, no ruin of disillusioned thoughts will ever bury. It is the token of a consecration from which good men have shrunk with a feeling of terror. Saint Francis of Assisi could never be prevailed upon to take the order of priesthood. Saint Ambrose of Milan accused himself of crimes he loathed in order to escape the piercing dignity. Bishop Synesius accused himself of heresy. Even in our own day I have known cultured men to shrink from it, whilst they asked some humbler service in the Church. That is the source of the profound reverence of a Catholic people for its priest, where the old belief is yet strong. In the West of Ireland you will find thousands who still believe that their priest—no matter how painfully obvious his humanity—could root them to the ground with a word.[1]

[1] Compare the profound reverence of savages for their priests sometimes. Mr. Frazer (*Golden Bough*) and Mr. Grant Allen (*Evolution of the Idea of God*) give innumerable instances of the priests being venerated as gods. The deification of the Roman and Chinese emperors and the Peruvian Incas (each a supreme priest) is well known. The ignorant mountaineers of the Neilgherries (to the north of India) surround their priest-gods with an extraordinary reverence; and hardly less is the awe in which many African tribes stand of their priests. The Badagas, who have human gods, called a Christian missionary who settled amongst them "three-quarters god."

When this prolonged special preparation and the ceremony of ordination have created a wide gulf between the priest and the people, it is natural to find the clergy distinguished by peculiar insignia and costumes. Doubtless Christ and Buddha and the other great religious founders wore no such distinctive marks, beyond the inalienable glamour of their nobility of life. But the impulse to give outward distinctions to the sacerdotal caste is world-wide and world-old. The Dyak of Borneo takes a female name and feminine costume when he becomes a priest. The civic priests of China don gorgeous robes in their hours of sacerdotal service. The priests of Mexico wore either black or white robes in their daily care of the people and bright vestments during their ministrations. So with the Christian priest. The black tunic which the early Roman priest adopted as the most austere dress of his country has become a professional distinction, and his bright silken vestments have been evolved by the same psychic process that gave them to the Buddhist and the Aztec priest. The tonsure, or shaving of the head, is another world-wide distinction. The priest of Isis shaved head and eye-brows in ancient Egypt. The Taoist priest shaves both sides of the head. No doubt it was from one of the religions of the Roman world that the Christian priest borrowed the practice; for the symbolic meanings which are now assigned to it (as that it is an

image of Christ's crown of thorns, etc.) are clearly later discoveries. Widespread, too, even amongst savage tribes, is the law that the people shall support their priests. The Esquimaux *angakok* does not join in the labours of his fellows. The Dyak priest is granted a man to protect him, as well as a wife. The pastoral priest, or god-man, of the Todas is richly supported by his flock. The Krous maintain their sacerdotal chief in greater affluence than their war chief, and grant his hut the right of asylum which was so long granted to Christian churches. Of the civilised religions it is not necessary to speak. Everywhere, says Réville, "that which produced sacerdotalism is the sentiment of the incapacity of the ordinary man, who does not believe himself capable of being or of doing what is necessary to realise union with divinity." It followed, as a matter of course, that they who dedicated their lives to the high training and peculiar habits required for the function of intermediary should be maintained by the community or by those they served. The public priest was maintained by a common fund; the private priest (for the private chaplain is by no means a distinctively Christian institution) was supported by the family or noble he served.

Of the privileges granted to the priest it is hardly necessary to speak, for modern civil law has swept all away except the social prestige which the priest still enjoys. The Canon Law of the Church still

enlarges on the two great rights of the cleric—the *jus fori*, or immunity from trial in the civic courts, and the *jus canonis*, or immunity from personal attack under pain of special excommunication. These privilèges have been more or less abolished even in Catholic lands. On the other hand, the spirit of the modern world has equally modified the restrictions which the Church formerly put upon its clerics to accentuate their distinction from the laity. The Catholic priest is still forbidden, in theory, to occupy himself with business or commerce (within certain narrow limits), to practise surgery (though not medicine), to hunt, frequent the theatre or the tavern, or gamble. The great changes which have come over life since these restrictions were first imposed have greatly altered their force, and the modern priest is little influenced by them unless they are locally enforced. Thus the London priest incurs suspension if he enters a London theatre, though his American colleague may visit it with impunity.

But there is one restriction that still lends a distinctive character to the life of the priest, and demands some ethical consideration. The law of celibacy, which is so stoutly maintained, even in face of internal revolt, by the Church of Rome, is a not unfamiliar feature of priestly organisation. Lubbock tells that amongst the savages of the Friendly Islands "the chief priest was considered too holy to be married"; and we find a more con-

sistent notion of celibacy amongst other tribes. The Mexican priests are said to have observed their vow with great rigour. The crude priest-god of the Todas was vowed to a strict celibacy. The higher priests of ancient Egypt and India, the Manichean priests, the Buddhists, and others have observed the same law. Evidently we have here the outcome of some deep-rooted quality of man's moral being. Once more, however, the law means something higher in the modern Church of Rome than it has ever done in any other priestly organisation. It applies to internal life as well as outward action. It governs thought and desire with the same rigour as conduct, and lends a peculiar sacrilege to every kind of sin against purity. No doubt, when it was urged by Gregory the Great in the fifth century, and reaffirmed for the whole of Western Christendom in the twelfth, it was a purely external law, and was exposed to many subterfuges. But the modern priest recognises in it a most comprehensive law, governing his invisible thought no less than his visible conduct.

What must the moralist make of such a law? What lesson is conveyed by the long experience of the Church of Rome? One may answer without hesitation that the Church has aimed at an unattainable ideal in its universal law of celibacy. There are indeed thousands of priests whose refining action on the world is deepened by their personal realisation of

that ideal; but the history of the Church and its present experience in every country prove that the enforcement of a celibate condition on all its clergy is a deplorable error. For the majority the law is a source of perennial danger and conflict; for large numbers it means sad disaster. Nor will the moralist who examines that ideal with discrimination regret that it has proved unattainable as a uniform condition of life for any large body of men. I need not enlarge on the virtues and graces of character which are almost necessarily missed by the celibate in his devotion to his ideal, but the briefest analysis of the zeal for celibacy discloses more than one indefensible element. It is the work of such men as St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine that is chiefly responsible for the law of celibacy in the Roman Church. Now, one need not go far in their writings on the subject to find that a most perverse sentiment enters into their thoughts. They see something inherently unhallowed and repulsive in carnal love, even during matrimony. One need only quote their high praise of continent spouses, and especially their exhortation, if not absolute precept, to abstain on holy days. Some of them, as St. Augustine, are driven to most extraordinary conclusions in virtue of this irrational feeling.[1] I will revert to the point when the question of asceticism occurs, but it is obvious that we have here a feeling whose roots go

[1] See some of the opinions he expresses in his *De Bono Conjugali*.

back into the ages of barbaric speculation. When we eliminate this feeling entirely from the celibate ideal we find little reason for urging it as a priestly law. And the second chief element of the ideal—the ascetic element—is hardly more commendable to the modern mind, as will appear in due course. Celibacy is a virtue and a source of power only for certain temperaments. A law of celibacy is an anachronism and an error.[1]

Such, then, is the system of training which has been gradually constructed by the Church of Rome in the course of its 2,000 years of experience. It embraces, usually in a purified and more rational form, almost every device that has been adopted in the priesthoods of the world for a similar purpose. It urges the contemplative practice of the Buddhist, without permitting that practice to stray into the dreamy and mystical vagaries which are inseparable from Hindoo contemplation. It imposes the fasting and austerity of the ancient Mexican discipline, without sanctioning the excesses which led in that religion to the cultivation of a callous and inhuman temper. It enjoins a moderate isolation from the daily life and pleasures of the community, without suffering the formation of the morbid and neurotic exaltation of the Esquimaux angakok, the Indian

[1] But the reader who is disposed to scoff at celibacy at all times may well be invited to conceive a married St. Thomas of Aquin or Thomas à Kempis, a St. Francis or a St. Clare.

fakir, the Mongolian shaman, and similar fanatics. It has tempered the asceticism of the older religions with an Aristotelian sense of moderation and a strong feeling for intellectual culture and sobriety of judgment. It has retained the idea that a peculiar and objective character is supernaturally stamped on the priest in ordination, yet has made this an argument for greater fervour in the cultivation of a personal and subjective holiness. It still lays heavy stress on the priest's sacrificial and ceremonial functions, with which we are not concerned here; but, in its unfailing association of "the glory of God" and "the salvation of souls" (by sanctification), it is equally concerned to make him an effective agent in the cultivation of the moral life.

For the Catholic priest is guided, as far as the influence of the Church can reach, by an ideal which is little or not at all known in the religions which present the greatest superficial resemblance to it. The Buddhist or the Taoist priest in China, who seems so like him in his gorgeous vestments and blazing tapers and swinging censers and all the rest, expends his zeal in the proper discharge of ritual performances. The Catholic priest is, no doubt, concerned as to the due performance of prescribed ceremonies, but he has also an ideal of inward and personal sanctification. Integrity of conduct is no less important in his eyes than integrity of belief and ceremonial exactness. He looks out upon the

world, when he emerges from the seminary, with a feeling of stern responsibility for its moral life. No amount of ritual practice or mechanical prayer-saying can be substituted for moral integrity in the teaching of the Catholic Church. Indeed, it reduces the *ceremonial* obligation of the ordinary Christian to very small proportions—merely exacting attendance at Mass, lasting half an hour, each week. On the other hand, it teaches that his *moral* obligation presses at every moment of his waking life, from the day when the unfolding mind has first caught the sense of sin to the hour, even to the second, when it sinks again into unconsciousness.

But before we examine the function which the Catholic priest discharges amongst his people, it is well to glance at some of the lower priesthoods in which his duties are vaguely and variously foreshadowed. The resolute believer in the supernatural origin or inspiration of the ethical structure of the Roman religion will deprecate comparisons that so strikingly suggest development ; and even the merely æsthetic or ethical admirer of its institutions is apt to be impatient of this digging in the soil of the past for the unlovely roots of a present beauty. But the humanist will find more than an interest in such passing observations. The day is over when we listened to the poet's lament that the physicist undid the glory of the rainbow or the botanist exposed the mechanism of the rose's charm. We

may know "the primrose by the river's brim" for a dicotyledon, yet something more. So may we see a beauty in the dim cathedral or the symbolic rite, though our mind go on beyond it to the rude stone altar with the disembowelled human victim or to the grotesque antics of some ancient sorcerer. We can appreciate the service of the modern priest as much —perhaps the more—when we have traced the long line of tottering steps by which he has reached his elevation.

Indeed, a comparative inquiry of this kind soon yields a very interesting result with regard to the relation of priest and people. In the beginning the priest—medicine-man, sorcerer, exorcist, or whatever name we choose to give him—was the servant of his fellow-men, a very real minister. "The sorcerer, the exceptional man who maintains a personal and intimate intercourse with the spirits, who is possessed by them, and is their voluntary or involuntary instrument, sometimes directed by them and sometimes directing them himself, healer of maladies, maker of charms, diviner of the future, revealer of secrets, denouncer of criminals, giver of rain and fine weather, is at once the priest, the doctor, the sage, the prophet, the artist, and the poet of primitive tribes."[1] The beginning of sacerdotal function which we find in him is really a social service; he has only to propitiate good spirits with a utilitarian aim and ward

[1] Réville, *Histoire des réligions*, ii. 238.

off evil ones. He represents the intelligence and treasures the hereditary knowledge of the tribe. When the Esquimaux priest has completed his exacting initiation he becomes "the public councillor, justice of the peace, universal authority, arbitrator in public or private affairs, artist of all kinds, poet, actor, buffoon, physician, and exorcist."[1] Gradually, with the advance of the general mind, he loses the monopoly of intelligence. Art, justice, knowledge, and medicine part company, and become separate and secular disciplines. The priest concentrates his care on ritual and the appeasement of the gods, though the people still spontaneously look to him, as in the Mexican and Chinese religions, for much direct and tangible human service. Then at length the ethical ideal comes to supremacy, and remains in closest association with the ecclesiastical function. The priest becomes once more, in the higher religions, a direct servant of his fellows (though the directness of the service is concealed under a veil of transcendental ethical doctrine) and a potent agent in the social order. In the ferment of religious activity which filled the Roman world in the fourth century this feature was conspicuous in all the living religions—Christianity, Neo-Platonism, Mithraism, Manicheism, and the cult of Isis. The others fell away in the political struggle, and Christianity retained the ethical fervour which had given them vitality. From

[1] Elie Reclus, *Primitive Folk.*

that day it has continued to advance in the service of man, to develop the ethical idea which has been entrusted to it.

It is, therefore, as I said, with a supreme concern for "the good of souls" that the priest issues from his seminary. However strictly he clothe his ideal with theological phrases, it coincides with (though overlapping and including more than) the ideal of the moralist. He exacts little of the ceremonial performance which is so much exaggerated in lower religions. It is by the avoidance of sin and the cultivation of a spirit of love, temperance, justice, and truthfulness that men are chiefly to seek salvation. God has reduced his ritual claim on his people, and placed the higher test of obedience in the fulfilment of the moral law. We may easily set aside the purely theological or sacerdotal function of the priest, as well as his dogmatic character, and follow him in his hourly and daily efforts to cultivate moral feeling and improve the lives of his fellows. At a later stage we shall have to study these efforts more at length from the point of view of the people. Here it will be enough if we glance at the series of duties and services which enters into the week's work of the average priest.

Let us take the weekly task of the parish priest in some moderately large village in the heart of Ireland or France as a typical illustration. We may regard the Saturday as the commencement of his

working week. The Saturday morning is usually overshadowed by the thought of the two sermons that must be given on the following day, and the priest will, as a rule, be found in his study or dining-room. The morning sermon takes its text from the "Epistle" or "Gospel" of the day—a chapter of the New Testament which the Church appoints to be read in the Mass every day, and to be read from the pulpit in the vernacular on Sundays—or may be a running commentary on the entire passage. The industrious priest will have consulted his commentators earlier in the week, and learned the interpretations and symbolic applications of the text, or perhaps sought the topical colouring and historical frame of the narrative; possibly the sermon is already written out and committed to memory. The evening sermon, the longer of the two, makes arbitrary choice of a subject—the festival of the day, a virtue or vice of practical import, a dogma, and so forth. The Saturday morning is spent in searching commentaries and *sermonnaires*, and preparing the points, if not the actual language, of the Sunday sermons. In the evening the confessions are heard. Only practical experience can give an idea how fatiguing this function is. The ceaseless stooping and whispering and alert attention to whispers, the tactful dealing with difficult or delicate cases, the ever-varying demand for counsel, rebuke, or encouragement involve a severe strain on mind and nerve. Yet the

priest knows that here is the finest ethical opportunity that the discipline of his Church affords. Here he will approach the consciences and hearts of his people more intimately than is possible in any other religion. He probably knows well both the outer and inner life of every man and woman and child that kneels beside him; possibly he has watched and guarded the growth of most of them from their earliest conscious years. And so, as they enter noiselessly into the darkened "box" and whisper their familiar stories through the grille, he must be supremely vigilant. Personal dilemmas, temptations, ruling passions, fallen ambitions—everything is discussed; he must, like the physician, remember all from week to week, though not a syllable dare he commit to paper. The good must be helped to higher spiritual levels, the struggling must be encouraged, the listless must be enkindled. At times he must in silence take on his own conscience the "penance" he dare not impose.

The Sunday is a day of yet more exacting labour. At seven or eight a Mass must be said for the early worshippers and the communicants, who have confessed on the previous night. If there are two priests, the one will say Mass at seven and eight, hear the confessions which have been deferred to the last moment, and preach at the later sung Mass; the other will say Mass for the children, interposing a brief instruction or sermonette at nine or ten, and

sing the High Mass at eleven.[1] The priest who has entire charge of a parish must take the early and the late celebration, hear the confessions, and preach the sermon; and he must, of course, observe a rigid fast until the close of the second Mass (usually about half-past twelve). Between the two he may conduct a marriage. He will go out, too, amongst his people, to strengthen the social link that relieves so well the strain of the spiritual bond, and a hundred details of administration will claim his attention. After dinner and a short rest he must go to his Sunday-school, keep a watchful eye on the youths and maidens who have passed out of the day-schools, and give them a moral or dogmatic discourse, founded on a text of the penny catechism, for half an hour. Then the baptistry claims him for an hour or so, and he may have to conduct the monthly meeting (with sermon) of one or other of the many confraternities into which his people are gathered, according to age or sex. Another very brief rest—laden with thought of the approaching sermon—and he must commence the evening service. He must sing the priest's part in the Vespers ("Evensong" in Latin) or Compline, or must read aloud the Rosary or other prayers, preach the sermon, and conduct the closing ceremony of the Benediction. Then he will go once more amongst his people for the lighter intercourse at the

[1] This dual celebration and other details about the Mass will be explained later.

church door which no sensible priest neglects—to see them in their Sunday finery, and ask the youths of their games, and affably tease the maidens and pat the heads of the youngsters, and give a cheering word to the aged.[1]

Thus the bulk of the pastor's ethical and spiritual work is compressed into two days of exacting labour. During the remainder of the week his ministry is usually light and more varied. There are indeed periodic festivals—"holidays (=holy days) of obligation"—when the Church seeks to silence the hammer and the plough, and close the shop, on week-days, to assert the supremacy of the spiritual ideal. On such days the Sunday programme is repeated; but the conditions of modern life are reducing that observance to evanescent proportions. There are also services to be conducted on many week-nights, as we shall see. But the chief task of the priest during the week is to follow the people amongst their avocations and into their homes. In the mornings he is urged by the Church to look to the renewal of his own ideal, to pray and read and reflect, "lest he

[1] It is worth noting that a normal pressure such as this does not absolve the priest from the recital of the "office" in his breviary. He must find a couple of hours for the private reading of this collection of psalms and prayers, and for personal devotions, of which (such as the "rosary," the "way of the cross," etc.) most priests undertake several by voluntary obligation. Where there are several priests the strain is greatly relieved, notwithstanding the greater volume of work. On the other hand it is considerably increased on special festivals.

become as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal": to nourish the sacred fire within that alone can make his ministry effective. Candour compels me to say that this high ideal is very imperfectly realised. After lunch the priest visits the homes of his people. Probably he has a directory of his congregation; not infrequently it is embroidered with hieroglyphics akin to those of the physician's note-book. Day by day he passes from house to house, learning of the refractory child or the errant husband who must be admonished, consoling or counselling in domestic troubles, bringing the sacraments to the ailing, gathering and distributing alms to the poor, glancing at the books that lie about in the home—how often is the novel hastily thrust out of sight when his voice is heard at the door, for he will mercilessly fling books on the fire, as he has been known to pour liquor down the sink—arbitrating on quarrels and removing estrangements, meeting the heretical friend or prospective son-in-law, soothing, encouraging, rebuking, threatening—entering into the whole life of his people.

This is not usually an arduous task, as I said, and it will be readily conceived that the work may, according to the priest and his circumstances, become little more than an agreeable social intercourse. But the ministry of the death-bed and the grave, and many another painful service, recall the priest to his ideal unceasingly. He is the ethical physician of his

people, with a heavy responsibility for every soul amongst them. They know it, and their hearts are open to him. But we must defer until a later stage a consideration of the relation from the side of the people.

CHAPTER III

GRACE AND THE SACRAMENTS

IN the conflict of what we may call, in the broader sense, Catholicism (Anglican or Roman) and Protestantism the sacramental system has ever been a chief subject of controversy. The Protestant rejects the elaborate structure on the ground that it sullies the purity and impairs the force of religion. The Catholic finds in the same structure a most effective auxiliary in the cultivation of religious feeling. To the Protestant the sacramental system is as the ornate screen with its sculptured saints that divides the nave from the sanctuary in many a continental church, and through which the eye of the worshipper vainly strives to follow the solemnity at the altar—strives until for very weariness it rests contentedly on the screen itself. To the Catholic the system is a beautiful structure that mirrors and conveys the gentle light of the higher world to the sense-bound soul. Where the Protestant sees only a screen that diverts the soul from a vision of God, the Catholic discovers a figured tapestry that God has

woven to aid the creation of the inner image. So, also, when we consider the sacramental system as the grace-distributing mechanism it chiefly purports to be. The Protestant, or the non-Catholic generally, talks contemptuously of magic and fetishism. He can see no reason, except the ambition of a priestly caste, for the framing of an elaborate intermediate structure where the direct infusion of spiritual force seems all that is demanded. The Catholic, on the other hand, discerns a superhuman art and wisdom in the devising of the sacramental scheme. "For man was blind in intellect," says St. Bonaventure, "and so visible sacraments were given for his instruction; he was elated with pride, and corporal sacraments were given to humble him; he was fastidious in the taste for spiritual things, and the sacraments were given to stimulate him, lest he should grow weary and sated in the contemplation of one object or of spiritual things alone."

With this secular contention we are not directly concerned here. The religious or theosophic working of the Catholic system may be entirely neglected, as it is here neglected, in a discussion of ethical effect. Whether or no the sacramental system hangs as a dead veil between the soul and God it is not ours to consider; nor need we tarry with the charge of magical virtue and fetishistic properties. But the sacramental system of the Catholic Church is not less interesting from our purely ethical point of view than

from that of theological controversy. The sacraments are the most conspicuous and most important elements in the Catholic ethical structure. It is true that the theological moralist assigns them this position on the theory that they are, in his language, the principal channels of supernatural force, or grace, to the soul. But a brief examination of their structure and their actual working in the life of the Church will make it clear that, whether or no they do convey this supernatural power, they do most assuredly infuse a moral and spiritual force of a natural order. As they are designed in the teaching of the Church, and when they are administered with due solemnity and sincerity, they are full of the fire of great and striking symbols, and may enkindle or nourish a high moral fervour. A general glance at the system in which they have arranged themselves in modern theology and Church practice, and a fuller inquiry into the working of the two chief and constantly repeated sacraments, Confession and Communion, must form an important part of a study of the Roman ethical discipline.

The basis of the whole structure in the mind of the Church is, as I said, the doctrine of grace. With the reality or unreality of this I am not concerned, but a few words of historical explanation are required. Experts of religious science, like M. Réville, point out that from the beginning man has not been content to take a merely theoretical interest in his gods.

The spirits or the great nature forces which he deified ages ago were living and very assiduous agents in the visible world. He soon learned to avert their anger and to borrow their strength in the battle of life. And when the moral life became clearly defined and greatly valued, it was necessarily to his God or gods that man turned for assistance in subjecting his rebellious nature to the higher code. In many polytheistic nations some one deity was entrusted with the functions of moral legislator and moral auxiliary. Even in the monotheistic religions the separative tendency asserted itself, and, as in Christianity, the work of sanctification was associated with one aspect or "personality" of the deity. Mr. Grant Allen regards the development of the dogma of the Holy Spirit as "one of the most curious chapters in all the history of artificial god-making." In any case, it is with the third person of the Trinity that the Catholic particularly associates the work of human sanctification, and here we have the starting-point of the sacramental system.

The next step is the development of the doctrine of grace. With the slow and obscure evolution—whether in the sense of Newman or of Harnack—of that doctrine in the early Church we need not deal. By the fifth century, at all events, it had come to mean an objective and substantive force of a supernatural order. A British monk of high character and great moral zeal, Pelagius, had hastened the full

enunciation of the dogma in opposing it altogether. Grace, he contended, was a name for every spiritual gift of the gospel; it meant the finer moral teaching of Christ, the force of his example, and so forth. St. Augustine, his great opponent, with a profound personal experience of moral weakness and a firm conviction of a primitive degradation of the human will, felt that the doctrine of an objective and substantive grace was a truism of the spiritual life. Seeing a lofty and imperious ideal on the one hand and a corrupted moral faculty on the other, he felt it an impeachment of God's justice to question the existence of this grace. The Eastern Church, and even the Roman, wavered for a time between the monk and the bishop; but the ardour of the African Church and the enlistment of the imperial interest decided against Pelagius. From the fifth century a clearly defined doctrine of grace prevailed in the Church.

With such a doctrine, and seeing the increasing ritualism of the life of the Church, it was natural that there should gradually be formed a complex system of grace-distributing agencies, to the chief of which the name of sacrament was soon exclusively assigned. The term was used in the Roman world to designate the money deposited in some sacred place by litigants, or an oath, especially the soldier's oath of allegiance. The Christian writers then used it as an equivalent of the Greek "mystery," and soon

it came to signify a hundred rites or objects in the Church life, including what we now call the sacraments, especially Baptism and the Eucharist. As late as the twelfth century Hugh of St. Victor's enumerates thirty sacraments. But half a century later the first of the great schoolmen, Peter the Lombard, restricted the name to the seven sacred rites which bear it to-day in the Roman Church.

The seven sacraments which were thus adopted by the Church and sanctioned by the Council of Trent form a scheme of supernatural agencies which is roughly adapted to the course of the moral life, as the modern theologian does not fail to point out. Taking them in the order in which they are usually enumerated, they represent a comprehensive control or frame of the individual career from the cradle to the grave. The child passing unconscious through the great gate of life is claimed at once for the ideal by the rite of Baptism. His guardians and sponsors are enjoined to treasure the thought of an initiation of which he will long remain ignorant, and with many symbols and ceremonies he is enlisted in the army of light, and the forces of darkness are driven off. As soon as the child's mind opens sufficiently to perceive the broad features of the moral drama he has entered into, the Church approaches him with the sacrament of Penance, and urges him—virtually compels him, as we shall see—to confess at frequent intervals. In a few years, when the child's sense of spiritual things

is more fully developed, he is prepared with great care for the sacrament of the Eucharist. In a few more years, usually when the first hot breath flushes the veins of youth or maiden with its counsel of rebellion, the sacrament of Confirmation must be received. The body is marked out in an especial manner as the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the oath of military fidelity to the holy ideal is publicly and solemnly renewed. Again a few years and the youth makes his momentous choice of sacred or secular service, and the choice is ratified by a fresh sacrament. If he choose the world, the sacrament of Matrimony puts a spiritual seal on his decision; if he consecrate his strength to the service of the ideal, the sacrament of Orders gives an impressive solemnity to his sacrifice and purpose. So he treads the worn path through the familiar symbolic gates. And when at length he shrinks before the last dread gate, that opens into the unknown land beyond, the Church comes to put the final seal on his consecration to the ideal by the sacrament of the last anointing, or Extreme Unction. Here, certainly, is an arresting structure of symbolism, whatever view we take of its origin and supernatural action. It is quite true that the theologian claims an inherent force in all these sacraments—a power to act *ex opere operato*, as he says. But he also declares that in nearly every case the moral virtue of the sacrament depends on the disposition of the receiver, and the

Church endeavours to stimulate that disposition by long instruction and preparation and by striking ceremonies. And since the ethical significance of each is supremely emphasised, it is clear that the sacramental scheme must represent a distinct moral and spiritual force, entirely apart from the question of the infusion of a supernatural agency.

In the case of Baptism, it must be admitted that the beauty of the sacramental theory is but faintly exhibited in the actual administration. On many a Sunday afternoon, when I have been engaged in administering the sacrament, I have seen sympathetic observers try to follow the long ceremony with, obviously, an almost total failure. The truth is that here the moral symbolism is marred by the dogma of original sin. In the primitive Church, although we find infant baptism at an early date, the sacrament was usually administered to the adult, and its ethical effectiveness was unquestionable. During the whole of Lent the "competent" was prepared by doctrinal and moral discourses from the bishop, and it was in an atmosphere of deep religious awe and solemnity that he was conducted to the *lavacrum* on (as a rule) the eve of Easter or Pentecost. The successive rites of the administration in the dimly lighted basilica—the renunciation of the seductive pleasures of the world (the Roman world), the imprecation of evil spirits or influences, the opening of the ears to the higher voice, the sealing of the fore-

head with the cross in sacred chrism, the purification of the mouth with salt, the final plunge in the cleansing element, and the white garments and chaplet worn for the ensuing week—must have spoken to the neophyte with the eloquent voice of living symbols. With the prevalence of the practice of infant baptism, the spiritual action on the receiver is entirely lost. That does not so much concern the Catholic, who believes that even the soul of the infant is profoundly influenced by the sacrament, but it leaves only an indirect effectiveness from our present point of view. The Puritan Pelagius, with an aversion to the sacramental idea akin to that of the modern Protestant, fought strenuously against the change, but the belief in an Original Sin, which would damn the soul if it were not cleansed in Baptism, entirely prevailed.[1]

However, Baptism has acquired an advantage by the change which it had previously lacked. In the early Church the moral effect of deferring Baptism until later years was disastrous. "He is not baptised yet," was the usual comment on the vices of a catechumen, as St. Augustine says. There were

[1] It is worth noting that Augustine was nearer to the truth, as regards our moral nature, than Pelagius. Modern science is agreed that we come into the world with a heavy weight of hereditary sin, and that we are drawn by a thousand hereditary impulses back to the animal life from which humanity has emerged. But, of course, we look to intelligent moral training, rather than to ceremonies which have no echo in consciousness, to correct this.

Christian writers who doubted if sin committed after baptism could be forgiven, and so the initiation into the moral world was indefinitely postponed. One effect of the transfer of the sacrament to the very beginning of life has been to sweep away the last shade of pretext for youthful laxity, and to assert the sovereignty of the moral ideal from the first dawn of consciousness. The child awakes to find itself already sealed for service in the army of the good. The Catholic believes that a gift of supreme worth, sanctifying grace, the "wedding garment" of Scripture, is communicated to the soul in Baptism. This gift, the soul's passport to eternity, is lost only by grievous personal sin; so that, whatever be the intellectual look of the dogma, its practical working is purely ethical. Hence, when the child arrives at the stage of moral discernment, he is carefully instructed in this theory of sanctifying grace and the ethical conditions of its loss and recovery. Thus the sacrifice of the symbolic force of the early Christian Baptism is not without some compensation in the moral system of the Church.

In one sense it would appear that this symbolic force of the sacrament is not lost, but transferred from the child to those who accompany it at the font. Just as we mark the passing of the last gate with our funeral ceremonies, so it is not unnatural to erect a symbol of human interest over the entrance of the child into life. In both cases there

is, or may be, a profound spiritual action on the assistants. Indeed, infant baptism is a sacrament that nature has inspired in peoples that are far removed from contact with Christianity. Far away in the Arctic circle we find the Esquimaux initiating their babes into life with an analogous ceremony—a crude and (to our eyes) sordid ceremony, it is true, but none the less a symbol of their religious feeling at a fresh entrance into the field of life. In ancient Scandinavia the new-born child was presented to the father, and, if he accepted it, he baptised it and gave it a name; after that, exposure would be regarded as murder. Long after Christianity had introduced its Baptism in Norway, the old rite was maintained beside it, or superadded to it, as a civic sanction of the child's entry into the life of the State. In the ancient Persian religion the new-born babe was baptised (a crude rite similar to that of the Esquimaux being added to the purification by water). The Brahmanists and the ancient Mexicans practised infant baptism.[1] In our own day bodies of men who have abandoned the last trace of the dogmas which inspire the Christian Baptism, such as the Positivists

[1] Baptism at one or other period of life was practised by the most widely distant peoples of antiquity—Brahmans, Buddhists, Chinese, Babylonians, Persians, Egyptians, Teutons, Mexicans, etc. The baptism of the Mithraic religion, one of the most serious ethical and spiritual rivals of Christianity in the fourth century, was a baptism by blood. The initiate stood in the stream of blood that flowed from the slain bull or ram.

and Secularists, desire to mark ceremoniously the reception of each new-born child into the civic and moral community.

Here, unfortunately, the Roman Catholic ceremony offers little for imitation. It is marred by that obstinate conservatism which hides so much of the finer element of the liturgy. Whatever may be thought of retaining Latin in such ceremonies as that of the Mass, it is utterly out of place in Baptism. The long and very curious ceremony is hurriedly performed, and the profound meaning of its constituent rites is wholly lost on the people. Parents and sponsors gaze with more astonishment than reverence as the priest puts a series of questions to them in Latin (answering himself), touches the nostrils and ears of the child with his spittle, puts a grain of salt in its mouth, leads them picturesquely into the baptistry with the end of his stole, and performs a number of similar rites. The student of Latin, who reads the service in liturgical works, finds a beautiful symbolism (from the Church's point of view) in it all, expressed in the simplest and most striking phrases. But as the priest is bound to read it in Latin, almost the whole effect is lost, and there remains only the dogmatic assurance of a purification of the child's soul. English Catholics should have a considerable advantage here with their vernacular rendering of the Roman service. However, Rome is being slowly induced to make concessions in the

matter, and the priest is already directed to read parts of the baptismal and funeral services in English.

Penance, the second of the seven sacraments, is familiarly known in the language of the Church as "the plank after baptism." There were, as I said, Christian leaders in the early Church who held that sin committed after baptism was unpardonable, but the belief that true repentance would merit forgiveness quickly prevailed. The idea of this later remission of sin naturally became associated with the practice of public or private confession, and in the course of time the complete doctrine of the sacrament of Penance was enforced on the Church. To this and the following sacrament, the Eucharist, I must devote a special chapter. Apart from the iteration in certain conditions of Matrimony and Extreme Unction, these two are the only sacraments that are continuously or repeatedly administered. The Catholic is bound to confess and communicate at least once a year. But it is only the minority who are thus content with the minimum which the Church enjoins. In every well-ordered congregation the majority confess and communicate at least once a month. These two sacraments form, therefore, an exceptionally important part of the Roman ethical discipline, and must be considered at greater length. For the moment they may be briefly noticed as they take their place in the life-scheme which the sacraments represent. The sacrament of Penance is first

administered when the child is believed to have developed a consciousness of sin, and consequently a liability to commit it. For practical purposes the Church assumes this development of conscience to have advanced sufficiently at the age of seven, and enjoins the obligation of confessing from that date onward. The modern moralist finds it difficult to imagine how the average child of seven can be credited with the faculty of meriting eternal damnation, but a consideration of that point would take us too far from our subject. I will only say here that the children are prepared with great care for their first confession—girls being usually prepared by nuns or lady teachers—and the young confessor is most strongly charged to use discretion in receiving the confessions of children. Most priests will grant that the vast majority of these young penitents are quite incapable of what the theologian calls mortal sin. The early age is fixed by the Church in a sincere, if misguided, belief that then begins in intelligent children the possibility of sinning grievously (as, for instance, by a substantial theft). Catholic children are almost always educated in voluntary schools, and from these they are led to the church about once a quarter for confession. The child is admitted to confession for two or three years, or more (according to its conduct and intelligence), before it is prepared for its first communion. For the sacrament of Penance only the broad feeling

of moral distinction is demanded; before the child is admitted to the Eucharist it must be capable of appreciating the Catholic dogma of the real presence, at least in a sufficient degree to ensure a becoming reverence. This is rarely attained before the ninth or tenth year, however eager the Church may be to open additional channels of grace to the young mind in its struggle with rebellious impulses. But I defer all further consideration of Penance and the Eucharist until the next chapter.

The sacrament of Confirmation, which is the fourth in the order of receiving, corresponds, on the ethical and spiritual plane, to a world-wide impulse. The giving of the *toga virilis* to the Roman youth or the *bonnet viril* to the Chinese, the admission of the Spartan boy to manhood, the recognition of the manhood of the young Indian,—all the ceremonies with which the most widely separate nations have marked the cessation of irresponsible boyhood, and given a collective sanction to the manly aspiration, are human analogues of the sacrament of Confirmation. It is administered at an age when the child's dim moral perception is passing into a definite sense of moral struggle, and its aim is to strengthen the resolution of the opening mind. Historically, Confirmation is merely a complementary part of the baptismal ceremony, which it immediately followed in the early Church. The bishop closed the rites of solemn initiation into the Church by laying his

hands on the neophyte, and marking him with the sacred symbol in chrism. It was the kiss of the Spartan mother, as she sent her son out to the field of battle. But with the increase of conversions the baptismal ceremony had to be committed to deacons and priests, and it was generally impossible to follow it up immediately with the "confirmation," or sacrament of strengthening. The interval between the two gradually widened, until the Confirmation came to be regarded as an entirely distinct sacrament. It still happens sometimes that an adult convert may receive the three sacraments—Baptism, Communion, and Confirmation (confession being omitted in such cases, unless a doubtful baptism has preceded [1])—on one day, but in the normal practice of the Church Confirmation is given several years after the first Communion, which is, as I said, several years subsequent to the first Confession. The divorce of the two and the erection of Confirmation into a distinct sacrament restores to an extent the spiritual force lost in the decay of adult baptism. The baptismal vow which was made vicariously at birth is now

[1] It may be well to explain the Catholic practice on the point. Baptism is "a sacrament of the dead"; it remits all sin committed before it without confession. Hence if the convert has certainly not been previously baptised, no confession is needed. However, the Anglican baptism is always held suspect, on account of an alleged carelessness in administration, and it is directed that the convert (1) confess, (2) be conditionally baptised, and (3) receive conditional absolution.

consciously and seriously renewed, and the Church confirms the resolve with its most solemn sanction.

Through the years of moral peril which lie between fifteen and twenty-one—the years which the experience of the Church has found most rebellious to spiritual influence—the youth or maiden is urged to frequent (to use the ecclesiastical phrase) the sacraments of Penance and Communion as much as possible. We shall see at a later stage that the Church has devised a great number of societies or confraternities to meet the dangers of this period, and one of the most constant rules of these half-social, half-spiritual fellowships is that of monthly confession and communion. However, the next serious crisis in the moral life occurs when, in the early twenties, the choice of a condition of life is made. In the early centuries, when every great Christian leader most strongly urged the ideal of virginity, whether one lived in the world or in a monastery, this decision was a serious matter to every earnest Christian. Now that the anti-matrimonial feeling has been greatly moderated, and the priest rarely advises the life of continence to those who live in the world, anxiety and deliberation are confined to the few. The majority press unhesitatingly along the broad road of life, though here also the Church has erected one of its symbolic gates, in elevating Matrimony to the dignity and holiness of a sacrament. A few still turn to the

narrower way of the dedication of one's life to God and to spiritual work. For these there is the sacrament of Orders, one of the most impressive rites in the liturgy, which we have already noticed. Some shrink from the responsibility and work of the priesthood, others are excluded from sharing it by their sex. For these the Church has framed the monastic system, which will come under our notice later on. The solemn taking of the vows is not a sacrament in the theological sense, but it is a rite of a most impressive kind—in some cases of a quite dramatic character—and may be associated with the sacraments from our ethical point of view.

But even the less ambitious majority must, as I said, take once more the ideal into their lives through the sacrament of Matrimony. The Catholic Church alone amongst the Christian sects holds Matrimony to be equal in dignity to Baptism and the Eucharist. No doubt that is due to its larger idea of revelation, which the Protestant bodies would confine to the books of Scripture. However, one readily understands how the early Church, with all its comparative depreciation of marriage, came to elevate it to the sacramental dignity. It had the folly and the licence of the Roman marriage before it. It saw that if it did not lend a sacred character to the marriages of the faithful, they would continue to have the wild bridal processions and the ribald songs of the pagan

wedding. It therefore added a sacramental solemnity to the marriage contract, and substituted a prayer for moral and spiritual help for the invocations of Venus and Priapus. In this spiritualising of the marriage contract the Christian Churches differ collectively from the other religions of the world. Yet it must be said that, besides attributing a special supernatural effect to the sacrament, the Catholic Church makes exceptional efforts to idealise the ceremony. One consequence of ranking it as a sacrament is that the Church demands a strict moral purification on the part of the receivers. It would be a sacrilege to receive it with grave sin on one's conscience. One might indeed quarrel with the idea that the Catholic confession is a potent moral purification, but after all the confession is declared quite valueless unless there is a real repentance and resolve to amend on the part of the penitent. Moreover, persons who intend marrying are often induced to make "general confessions" (of all previous sins) before the ceremony; and most frequently, if not generally, they receive communion on the morning of the wedding. However, I would not press the ethical value of the actual marriage rite. The Catholic service has no superiority to the Anglican, and in any case the hour is unfavourable, as a rule, for anything like spiritual influence. On such an occasion a ceremony that is at once humanist and

idealist, like that of Positivists or Ethicists, has a greater chance of moral effect.[1]

The last gift of the Church (apart from the Viaticum, or Last Communion, which we shall notice presently), the last of these symbolic arches that it has raised over the path of the moral life, is the sacrament of Extreme Unction. The phrase, said to have been introduced by Peter the Lombard in the twelfth century, is, as is known, the Latin for "the last anointing." The Protestant sects have not unnaturally discarded the rite, in rejecting the sacramental idea, for it is one of the Roman sacraments which can only be appreciated on the dogmatic theory. There are, indeed, occasions when the ceremony is moving and impressive. I remember well the anointing of a young student who was suddenly discovered to be dangerously ill in our monastery. The community bell rang its triple summons to a special gathering, and the monks preceded the superior, with the sacred oils, in solemn procession to the infirmary, chanting the grave and touching *Miserere* as they went through the cloisters. All gathered silently about the bed, whilst the dying

[1] I will add one point, in connection with the sacrament of Matrimony, which is a little beside my present purpose. The Church teaches that in this case—the only one out of the seven—the receivers (the bride and bridegroom) are also the ministers of the sacrament. That will explain how the Catholic admits the *validity* of marriage in a registry office, or even without any witness whatever. But such marriages, though valid, are illicit, so that the parties are forced to seek the more solemn celebration.

youth feebly asked their pardon for whatever ill he had done by bad example, and the superior assured him of the common forgiveness. Then sense by sense and limb by limb he was released of his transgressions. Such ceremonies are long remembered. But the ordinary administration of Extreme Unction to the laity is almost destitute of moral or symbolic force. Its Latin form prevents bystanders from having more than the vaguest perception of its meaning, and the anointing of the contracting limbs and sense-organs is frequently painful to witness. I have performed the ceremony twice, and in both cases on women who were absolutely unconscious. There is little or nothing to be said about the matter from our ethical point of view.

One aspect of the sacrament of Extreme Unction deserves a passing word. It is the sacrament which has retained with an especial clearness the marks of its natural origin. The practice of anointing in grievous illness was confessedly borrowed from pre-Christian times, when it was very general in the East; the theologian could only claim, I think, that in Catholicism the natural rite has been converted into a sacrament. Thus it had a direct hygienic or medicinal purpose in the beginning, and it retained this character very prominently during many centuries of the Christian Church. We read in the *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities* that, though the Christian custom was always to use oil that had been

blessed by the priest, it was not enjoined until the ninth century that the priest himself should anoint. From that time the hygienic element was less emphasised. However, it is still formally recognised by the Church, which encourages the faithful to believe that it may cure the patient. One meets many Catholics who are believed to have been miraculously saved from death in this way. It is directed to be administered, not in the last extremity, but as soon as the doctor pronounces the condition serious. In cases of cancer or consumption the patient may be anointed months before death takes place.

But the category of what the Protestant critic calls the magical elements in the Catholic system is not exhausted when we have dealt with the seven sacraments. There is a still larger class of sacred things or sacred rites which are credited with an innate virtue (after due consecration), or which, as the theologian says, act *ex opere operato*. These also are "outward signs of an inward grace," but the grace they are believed to convey is not that supreme gift which the Church calls "sanctifying grace," and likens to the indispensable wedding garment. And lest I should seem unduly to encourage the charge of magic and fetishism, which the critic flings contemptuously at such objects, let me explain that here also, as in the case of all the sacraments which are administered to the conscious person, the grace re-

ceived does largely or mainly depend on the moral disposition of the receiver. It is only in the case of infant baptism and the anointing of the unconscious that the Church attributes an efficacy to a mechanical rite, independently of the co-operation of the receiver. The confession or communion or confirmation which is not supported by an excellent moral disposition gives no grace, and may be a sacrilege. So it is, in a lesser degree, with these secondary rites, which the Church calls "sacramentals." Whilst Peter the Lombard fixed the idea of the sacrament, Alexander of Hales, the distinguished English theologian of the first part of the thirteenth century (as Duns Scotus was of the second part), provided the class of the *sacramentalia* into which were gathered the rites that were denied the august dignity of the sacrament. It must be admitted that the humanist will find only an indirect interest in the class, yet it would be an error to ignore the sacramentals altogether. In the first place their effectiveness essentially demands the co-operation of the receiver by a good life or good purpose.[1] That is a contribution to practical ethical discipline. Then, these sacramentals are chiefly aimed at the propulsion of evil spirits; and, as I will

[1] There are exceptions claimed, however. Stories are told in Catholic literature of "miraculous medals," or tiny medals stamped with an image of the Virgin, being placed clandestinely under the pillows of sinners or unbelievers, and effecting their conversion. Such devices are not infallible. One of the last things I noticed in casting off my monastic habit for ever, six years ago, was that I had worn one of these "miraculous" medals to the last moment.

show, the evil spirit is to the modern Catholic little more than the incarnation of immoral suggestion.

A few words on the most familiar of the sacramentals, holy water, will serve to illustrate their function. It is well known that the aspersion of the people with sacred water is a practice common to a very large number of religions. In not a few barbaric tribes lustral water is found. In ancient Mexico it was familiar; and the Taoist and Buddhist priests use it freely in the great processions in China to-day. In the ancient Babylonian and Egyptian religions this aspersion was common, and every student of the Greek and Roman religions knows how incessantly they employed it.[1] In the early Christian Church it was the baptismal water which was credited with this special virtue, and in the course of time the demand became so great that water had to be blessed especially for the purpose. Innumerable miracles were ascribed to its action, but its chief function was, and is (though it is now less expressly conceived), the propulsion of demoniac influences. And since in our day the work of the evil spirits is chiefly regarded as an ethical (or contra-ethical) activity, it is clear that we must see an ethical element in the sincere use of holy water. So it is with the wearing of agnus deis, scapulars,

[1] Sozomen speaks of Julian as being aspersed in a Gallic temple "after the Greek fashion." A somnolent transcriber once converted this into "after the ecclesiastical fashion," a curious commentary on Christian borrowing.

and medals. The agnus dei is a little leather or silken case, containing a particle of the Roman Easter candle in the form of a lamb, which is suspended round the neck. The scapular is a picture of the Virgin or a saint on cloth, similarly worn on the breast. All these objects, as well as the fragments of relics and the crosses which Catholics wear, and the rosary-beads of wood or berries from the Holy Land, which they carry in their pockets, are believed to have more or less virtue in repelling the tempter, and consequently temptation.

A large number of objects and ceremonies could be brought under the head of sacramentals, but these illustrations will suffice. When they are considered in themselves some of them seem to the modern moralist to be pure fetishes or charms, without a single moral feature to redeem what he regards as a superstitious theory. But even the most curious of them takes a legitimate place in a large scheme of the distribution of grace. From his central dogma of the Sanctifier and of sanctifying grace the Catholic proceeds logically to the simplest object and the least impressive rite to which the Church attaches a distributive character. And when we choose to overlook the intellectual structure on which all are ultimately grounded, there are few of the sacraments and sacramentals which we do not find to have an idealist value and to contribute more or less to the moral life in the Church of Rome.

CHAPTER IV

CONFESSION AND THE EUCHARIST

THE sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist now claim that especial consideration which they so clearly merit in the Roman ethical discipline. Here, indeed, is the very nicest question in the whole of our subject. On the one hand the Catholic apologist maintains that these two sacraments are the chief and fullest sources of moral inspiration in the life of his Church. From the moment when the youthful mind attains to a fair appreciation of the higher ideal and the struggle that it involves until the shrinking thread of consciousness is broken for ever these two rites must be the most potent aids to the good will. Yet the Protestant and Rationalist critics will have it that this claim is not merely untrue, but the reverse of the truth. For many a long year a fierce controversy has raged about the confessional, and stinging waves of intellectual criticism have beaten upon the doctrine of transubstantiation. With the latter question, no doubt, we have properly no concern; and the charge of actual

disservice to ethical interests is not usually extended to the Catholic Communion. However, our point of view will be the same in both cases. Whatever be the strength or weakness of the historical or dogmatic foundations of these rites, what is their actual ethical value in the life of the Church of Rome?

And, first, let me point out that auricular confession is not the distinctly Roman practice many suppose it be. We find it, in varying degree, in the most widely distant religions. Flügel says[1] that the practice is found wherever there is any degree of civilisation and often, in a sense, at lower levels. Several of the African negro tribes have the practice in a rudimentary form, he states. The natives of Polynesia often confess their graver sins to their priests, and the Indians used frequently to confess during a serious illness. In Mexico and Peru the practice of auricular confession had a most remarkable development. In Mexico especially the hearing of confessions was one of the most familiar functions of the clergy, and the formula of absolution was singularly like that of the Catholic priest. The confession to the priest—for there was a kind of sacred confession of man to wife, wife to husband, child to parents, and so forth—was usually deferred until the close of life or the occurrence of a serious illness; it was believed, as in the early Christian Church, that forgiveness was final and not to be

[1] *Das Ich und die sittlichen Ideen*, p. 38.

repeated. The priest went to the house of the penitent, and they sat with a fire between them, on which both cast a few grains of copal (the Mexican incense). The penitent then, putting his hand to his mouth as an expression of a resolve to tell the truth, confessed his sins in the order they had been committed, and received a penance—a fast, an incision, a sacred dance, the sacrifice of a slave, etc. Finally, the priest, who was usually a celibate, and always under the gravest obligation of secrecy, pronounced absolution in the name of his god.[1] In Peru the priest took a pinch of maize from his pocket, and absolved or refused absolution, according as the number of grains was even or uneven. Réville would lend a predominantly civic character to confession in both these religions, but the details he gives seem to place greater stress than he allows on the ethical aspect. Passing from the far west to the far east we find auricular confession to be a familiar rite in Chinese Buddhism. In ancient Greece the practice is found associated with many of the obscure "mystery" celebrations, which insisted on the purification of the

[1] Réville, *Histoire des réligions*, ii., observes that the likeness to Catholicism of Mexican forms of absolution, prayers, etc., has been exaggerated. Curiously enough, it is the Catholic missionary P. Sahagan who has thus modified the real Mexican formulæ, little suspecting what conclusions a later generation would draw from that resemblance. Yet the parallel remains very striking, and affords a strong proof of the indigenous character of the Mexican religion, all the suggested communications from the Old World greatly antedating the development of auricular confession in Europe.

participant. Flügel quotes a story of a Spartan who sought initiation into the Samo-Thracian mysteries. The priest directed him to confess his more serious sins, and he asked: "To you or to God?" And when the priest explained that it was "to the god," he very characteristically retorted: "Then you stand aside." Reclus, in his *Primitive Folk*, tells of a curious practice amongst the Thomist Christians of Malabar, which seems to point to a crude pre-Christian feeling for confession rather than a simple degeneration. At Easter these good people write their larger sins on paper, and a bamboo canon is employed to scatter their written transgressions and open a new account with the Almighty.

I have not attempted to make a complete inquiry into the extent of the practice, but have said enough to illustrate the naturalness of the idea of auricular confession. Whether or no it is true that, as Plutarch (quoted by Flügel) urges, confession is an indication of moral progress, we have at least a very natural impulse to confess making its appearance in very different branches of the human race with the progress of their ethical code. No doubt this is at times a barbaric impulse, a crude and naïve thought of escaping the corrosive stain or the penal consequences of sin by the acknowledgment of misconduct. But it would be a serious error to ignore the finer element in the feeling for confession. It is only the more refined moral nature that finds an

oppressive burden in the sense of sin committed, as distinct from the fear of penal consequences. Yet this aching consciousness often begets an impulse to confess to someone no less than the meaner motive. The literature of every high civilisation offers numerous instances of this; and there can be few who have not met men and women of culture outside the Church of Rome who almost envied the Catholic penitent.[1] The confessional is, in its essence, one of nature's institutions.

When, however, we turn from the ideal to the concrete institution which is presented in the life of the Church of Rome, we face an ethical problem of great difficulty. Here is the quintessence of papal offence in the eye of the anti-papal writer, yet the most potent implement of moral culture in the Church's own claim. Of its very nature the confessional is the part of the Roman ethical structure which is least accessible to the non-Roman moralist; and, on the other hand, the seceder is apt to bring away only a consciousness of its defects, whilst the believer presents an equally untrue picture in the opposite sense. Setting aside the question of the

[1] Not infrequently the Catholic confessor detects that his would-be penitent is a non-Romanist, and must dismiss him (or, more generally, her) unheard. Sometimes these are Anglicans, but whether they are usually sincere, or only moved by curiosity, I cannot say. The priest cannot give absolution on account of the doubt as to their baptism; and not one priest in a thousand would entertain the idea of hearing confession without giving absolution, as a purely natural ethical discipline.

history of the confessional in the Church of Rome, which does not lie within the limits of my design, I will endeavour to depict as faithfully as I can the ideal and the theory of the sacrament of penance which the Church cherishes, as well as its actual working in the life of the Church.

Probably I shall be followed more easily by many readers if I start with an allusion to a brief examination of the confessional which I made some years ago in my *Twelve Years in a Monastery*. The chapter which dealt with the confessional was professedly a criticism of that institution, and it may still be recommended as a summary of the abuses which are associated with its exercise. But the present work, aiming as it does at the detection of whatever moral force there is in the Roman system, must discover aspects of the confessional which had only a passing mention, or were wholly presupposed, in the earlier study. I did, indeed, even there reject the grosser notions which still circulate amongst ignorant or prejudiced people about the confessional. Here I must examine the confessional rather in the light of the more serious and sober questioning of impartial moralists, who see more in it than an invention of priestly ambition. And first it is expedient to analyse the real conception of the sacrament of penance which the Church offers and sanctions. The most persistent objection to the moral force of the Catholic confessional is that it

tends to blunt or impair the natural consciousness of sin by offering a periodic mechanical purification from its stain and its consequences. The critic believes that the Catholic penitent must be encouraged in sin by the facility with which he obtains absolution. Such critics do not always realise the true nature of the Catholic theory. There are four elements in the sacrament, according to the teaching of the Church: (1) the confession of sin committed, (2) sorrow for the sin, (3) a "firm purpose of amendment," (4) satisfaction, or the discharge of some penal imposition. Contrary to a widespread opinion, it is the second and third conditions which belong inalienably to the essence of the sacrament. The confession may be dispensed with, as in cases of grave illness or imminent peril of death; and the performance of a penance may be omitted in similar conditions. But the Church teaches every Catholic who approaches the confessional that without a genuine sorrow for the sin committed and an honest purpose to avoid it in future there is no absolution. The penitent may deceive the priest by an insincere profession of sorrow and good purpose, but he knows (for the point is repeatedly emphasised from the pulpit) that the form of absolution which the priest is thus induced to pronounce has no effect whatever in such circumstances. As in the case of other sacraments, so here especially the efficacy of the rite depends essentially on the moral disposition

of the penitent. From one point of view the power of the rite or the power of the priest may be regarded as "magical," but that epithet obscures a most important feature. Unless there is a real consciousness of sin on the part of the receiver, and a sincere desire to reform, the uplifted hand and the magical formula have no more effect than a breath of wind; or if they have, it is in deepening the guilt and the indebtedness of the sinner. The priest is directed by his theological training to discover carefully if sorrow and repentance are really present; to induce them by his own exhortation if he cannot detect them in the disposition of his penitent; and to refuse absolution until he is assured of their presence. If he is still uncertain (whatever the penitent may say) he gives absolution conditionally. But, in any case, the Catholic knows that no priest and no power on earth can absolve, however utterly he may be deceived, if the moral conditions are wanting.

This must put a different complexion on the sacrament of penance as a moral institution, at least when we regard it in its theory. Looking from the theological point of view, the Catholic really obtains forgiveness on the same terms as every other Christian, with the additional difficulty of having to make a vocal and detailed confession to a fellow-man. From the broader ethical point of view, which recognises no absolution, the confessional would seem to have a

distinct moral force. As long as the stress is placed so heavily on the moral disposition, it would seem a beneficent provision to compel people to face their transgressions periodically, and offer strong inducement to conceive a sorrow for them. The Catholic is bound to confess once a year,[1] but, as I have said, few restrict themselves to this minimum of practice. It would seem to be a considerable advantage of the Roman system that it induces its believers to examine their consciences seriously once a month—the general practice—and renew their enfeebled purposes. Here, however, we pass from the world of ideals to the world of realities, to the plains of earth, where the light of the ideal falls in broken shafts on the cloud-wrapt surface of life. We find instances where the confessional is, in fact, a most potent aid to the good will; instances where it makes no difference, or little difference, to the moral life; and instances where it is perverted into an engine of corruption. On serious reflection the moralist would be able to forecast with some confidence this scheme of its operation. It is most clearly not an institution suited to every moral and mental temper. If the practice of confession be inspired by whatever beneficent power does suggest moral institutions, the law of *universal* confession is clearly of sacerdotal origin—

[1] The obligation to confess is in itself indefinite as to time, but it is practically fixed by the obligation to communicate "at Easter or thereabouts"; for it is sacrilege to communicate in a state of grievous sin.

whether in honest blunder or no, need not concern us here. The Catholic Church holds that the source of its law is dogmatic and transcendental, so that it lies outside our present limits. But it must be said that the universal law of auricular confession does not commend itself to the moralist.

It would be a formidable task to give a brief comprehensive view of the action of the confessional in the life of the Church of Rome. I will rather endeavour to sketch some of the chief degrees of its working, or some of the more clearly defined classes of those who frequent it. It will readily be conceived that the confessional is a real help in the higher stages of moral and spiritual life. Catholics of this kind usually confess once a week. They have very rarely serious sin to declare. Indeed, a priest often resorts to the *pia fraus* of pronouncing over them a blessing which they wrongly take to be absolution; their peccadilloes are not "matter" for absolution, in the technical phrase.[1] There are, however, distinct advantages in these confessions. To be brought face to face with one's moral defects every week and to examine one's conduct in the

[1] That is to say, the priest only absolves from "mortal" sin, or that which merits eternal punishment; or at least cannot give absolution for "venial" (or slighter) sins only. To obtain "matter" he usually asks the penitent to repeat the confession of some earlier grave sin. In such cases the penitent does not necessarily go into detail. The penitent is never obliged to confess "venial" sins, and if he chooses to do so need not go into detail. As a fact, however, the Catholic usually confesses all the sins he recollects.

searching light of a high ideal is not a slight assistance. And as such penitents usually choose an experienced and, as far as possible, a very religious confessor, the weekly discussion of temptations, inner or outer, tendencies, and aspirations counts for a good deal in the perfecting of character. The biographies of the finer men and women of the Catholic Church nearly always reveal a constant and anxious use of the confessional. From these higher types of spiritual ambition we descend, through countless gradations, to the great majority of well-disposed Catholics, who may be supposed to go to confession once a month. Here also I think we must recognise a distinct moral action of the confessional. Given a fairly steady moral purpose, even with occasional grievous sin, the confessional must help to concentrate one's good purposes and renew the quickening touch of the ideal. But it would be easy to over-estimate the advantage here. A kind of social or domestic pressure often counts for much in this monthly confession, and the tendency is to lapse into the mechanical conception of the institution. Below these we find the equally large category, not separable by even the thinnest moral line, of the capriciously good, sinking at length into the habitually vicious. Here it is that, especially in Catholic countries like France and Italy, the Protestant may find his instances of a downright mechanical idea of absolution with all its vicious consequences. The

worst types of the class are only induced to confess once a year, or even less ;[1] it cannot be claimed that the confessional exercises any appreciable restraint on these. But even a large proportion of those who confess monthly are quite uninfluenced by the confession. There is assuredly a tendency amongst them to hold (in spite of the Church's teaching) a mechanical view of the process of absolution ; to think that they have really obtained pardon, without further condition, if they have induced the priest to utter the formula ; or to force a momentary and ineffective feeling of "repentance." Perhaps it would not be unjust to say that the use of the confessional rather depends on the moral disposition than *vice versâ ;* and when one reaches the moral level where a serious use begins, the practice reacts on, and promotes, the moral life. Finally, there is a curious group, or collection of groups, of morbidly disposed penitents. Women, and girls especially, are apt to be thus morbidly influenced by the secret and delicate whispers of the confessional, for which they sometimes evince an inordinate craving, and which they seek to obtain and abuse in extraordinary ways.

[1] I have given elsewhere a dispute I once heard between two experienced Belgian priests on the respective merits of the Fleming and the Walloon in the "box." The Premonstratensian (a Walloon) claimed that you could trust a Walloon (though not a Fleming) when he comes to confess. "Yes," said the Franciscan, "*when* he comes—that is, twice in his life" This was a friendly quarrel "over cups" in the monastery, and the reader will allow a proportionate discount.

I must refer the curious reader to the chapter on the confessional in my *Twelve Years in a Monastery*.

I have spoken of classes, but the reader will understand that I have been thinking rather of stages or tendencies which run into each other by imperceptible gradations. The bulk of the Catholic body lies between the two extremes of my classification. Probably the conclusion of the impartial moralist will be that the confessional is an institution of ethical value, but of too subtle and delicate an action for indiscriminate commendation.[1]

From the subject of confession the mind passes perforce to the sacrament of the Eucharist, for the

[1] I add a few points of the Catholic system which may not be generally understood.

The *satisfaction*, or penance, which I have described as the fourth element of the sacrament, consists of a spiritual task imposed by the priest as penalty—a prayer, fast, alms, and so forth. No money is ever paid for absolution, directly or indirectly. The slit for coins which is sometimes noticed in the confessional is for the convenience of the penitent, who wishes to take this opportunity of having a mass said, or money given to the poor, etc. The absolution only relieves the penitent of the sentence to hell, but the liability to suffer in purgatory remains. It is to the latter that an *indulgence* refers—which is not, of course, a permission to sin. Thus, an indulgence of "a hundred days" means a remission of so much purgatorial punishment as would have been obliterated by a hundred days' public penance in the early Church. Indulgences, therefore, belong to the province of dogma, not ethics. Lastly, the Church seeks to increase the restraining force of the confessional by reserving the power to absolve from more serious sins to certain elderly priests, or the bishop, or even the pope. The last extremity is chiefly for priests or women who attempt to abuse the confessional. They are involved in a network of reservations which practically prevent such abuse.

two are almost inseparable in the spiritual life of the Church of Rome. Confession is, indeed, almost entirely regarded as a purificatory rite that prepares the faithful for receiving the Eucharist. The Catholic who confesses on Saturday has invariably the idea of communicating on the Sunday morning. Nor is it necessary to explain the conjunction, for the Catholic theory of the Real Presence is very generally understood. All the Christian sects (except the Quakers) have the communion rite, but the Catholic conception of its nature is, as is known, entirely distinctive. From the vague sacredness which is attached to it in the simpler sects, one rises, through the increasingly ritualistic sects or sections, to the familiar Roman theory of entire transubstantiation. Once the priest has pronounced the words of consecration, it is believed that the divinity and humanity of Christ pass beneath the veil of the phenomena, and that this is the reality received in communion.[1] The doctrine is familiar, and I am not concerned with either its theological or philosophical aspect. But it will probably be entirely expected that a communion which is accompanied with a belief of that kind is an important moral influence.

The idea of communion is by no means so distinctive of Christianity as is generally thought. We

[1] Curiously parallel is the Chinese opinion with regard to the food they have offered to their spirit-ancestors. When they consume this afterwards, they believe the substance is there no longer and they are enjoying only the "species." See Prof. Hæckel's *Insulinde*, p. 214.

can follow the growth of the idea up from extremely lowly stages of religious feeling. "It is one of the rites," says Réville, "where one can trace in completely uncivilised religions the tendency to a divine consubstantiation, which will inspire more highly developed religions with august dogmas and sacraments." As I have already said, man soon passed from a theoretical view of his gods and the worship of them to a desire to share their strength and their superhuman qualities. Some students of religion think the dance was the earliest notion of a communion with the gods, and it is notoriously through the dance that the priests of many lower religions (such as the dancing dervishes) pretend to win the influence of the gods. From this the idea enlarges until there arises a notion of actual transference. The Kaffirs complete their dance by partaking of the victim that has been offered to "the spirit of the dead"; their warriors make incisions in their bodies and insert pinches of the ashes of the victim. Amongst the Red Indians the chief sorcerer would rush amongst the people when he was in the frenzy of divine possession, and they would freely offer themselves to be bitten by him. The desire to partake of the god, generally for the sake of physical advantages, takes innumerable forms in savage religions. And when we pass to the middle or barbaric religions the idea takes on a remarkable precision, and the moral element begins to appear. In the

national religion of China the communion is a solemn eating *with*, not *of*, the gods. The emperor, or other officiant, solemnly partakes of the wine and food that have been offered, and he must be rigorously prepared for the honour. In ancient Peru the practice was very similar, though sacred cakes were also consecrated and eaten. In Mexico communion was as fully developed as confession. On the festival of the death of Uitzilpochtli, the priests made an image of him with dough (a mixture of maize-flour and children's blood). This was pierced with an arrow after many ceremonies, and the people solemnly ate the fragments it was broken into. Uitzlipochtli, the giver of morality and civilisation, was called by them "the god we eat," and those who "communicated" on his annual festival were distinguished in the community for a year as "eaters of the god." On the feast of the god of fire, a dough image of the god was placed on top of a high tree, and the people scrambled for the pieces when it was at length cast down. When any were sick of diseases caused by humidity (rheumatism, etc.), they sent for the priest of Tlaloc, the god of water, who brought a dough statuette of the god, consecrated it, and communicated the patient from it. Coming nearer to Christianity, we have only to mention the sacrifice of Melchisedec, the Persian communion of the sacred Haoma, the Jewish Passover, the corn and wine of the Eleusinian mysteries,

and the Mithraic and Manichean communion. When Faustus, the Manichee, wished to depreciate St. Augustine's religion, he exclaimed, "You have just the same cult of the bread and the chalice as the pagans."

There are those whose æsthetic and religious feelings are chilled by such an inquiry into the antecedents of a symbol they hold to be lofty and impressive. Apart from its relation to the question of origin, with which I have no concern, the devout Catholic has no reason to shrink from such an inquiry in the case of the Eucharist. The doctrine and the rite which inspired the *Pange lingua* of St. Thomas, and which we have to study in the Roman system to-day, differ from these crude conceptions no less than the glory of the rose is raised above its earthy roots. It is not simply that the doctrine of the presence has become so precise, but the idea of the divinity who is present has passed into an almost purely ethical idea. The communicant in the lower religions dreams only of sharing a superhuman strength to slaughter; the communicant in the higher religions was still chiefly intent on material advantages, though here and there the moral ideal asserted its nascent empire. To the Catholic, communion is an almost purely ethical rite of the intensest kind. The God he receives is conceived almost exclusively at that moment as infinite sanctity, and the thought of any other ad-

vantage than a moral one is rare and secondary. In theory, the Catholic communion should be a means of burning the moral ideal into the conscience of the communicant.

How far the theory of the Catholic communion does in reality exert this high power must naturally depend on the extent to which it is realised by the faithful, and so it will be well to follow the efforts the Church makes to insure this appreciation. The first communion is usually deferred until about the ninth or tenth year, when the child is thought to be capable of receiving instruction. The children are prepared for some months by special classes and instructions, and their conduct is closely watched during that time, and made a condition of their being admitted to communion. The Church then encourages parents and pastors to make the day of the first communion as festive and ceremonious as possible. The pretty ceremonies that mark the occasion in Catholic countries are generally known—the white dresses and veils, the presents, and the fondling of the entire village.[1] Even in England the Church

[1] One may gather something of the spirit of the occasion from a legend of Napoleon which is religiously circulated amongst Catholics all over the world. It is stated that someone asked the famous prisoner at St. Helena which had been the happiest day of his life, and he replied —the day of his first communion! To pass from the great to the little —from the elect to the outcast—my own recollection of my first communion day is made up of the relics of two sentiments that must have occupied the entire day: one of deep disappointment that I was not allowed to communicate at the altar in white surplice and pretty pink sash, and one of joy that I carried Cardinal (then Bishop) Vaughan's train in the afternoon.

succeeds in kindling some excitement over the occasion. The child is then initiated into some society or confraternity whose rules bind it to confess and communicate once a month; and it passes, as the years go by, through a series of these confraternities, adapted to various ages, until the habit of monthly communion is firmly implanted, or even until the close of life. The early instruction is continued and deepened by countless sermons. No subject is more frequently taken by the preacher than the Blessed Sacrament, and the gravity and solemnity of the communion are earnestly inculcated. Then there are annual festivals of the Eucharist, when the idea of the Real Presence is enforced with a resplendent ritual. There are processions in which the sacrament is borne under a silken canopy, amidst clouds of incense, between crowded ranks of prostrate worshippers. There is the weekly "Benediction" (on Sunday evening, and sometimes oftener), when the sacrament is exhibited to veneration in a golden "monstrance," while the altar gleams with tapers and flowers, and the people are blessed with it by the priest at the close. There is the annual ceremony of the Quarant' Ore, when the sacrament is exposed day and night for forty hours amidst hundreds of candles and an infinity of flowers. There is the annual festival of the Eucharist, the Corpus Christi or Fête Dieu, when, in Catholic lands, the whole population of a town—civic, military, and ecclesi-

astical—form a wonderful procession through the streets before the sacrament under its silken canopy.

There is assuredly no lack of effort on the part of the Church to maintain a high appreciation in the minds of communicants. The rigorous law of fasting before communion is well known; not even a spoonful of water may be taken after midnight on the morning of communion, except in cases of grave illness. Then the communicant is urged to spend at least a quarter of an hour before and after communion in concentrated thought on the ceremony. The Real Presence is believed to remain some ten minutes after communion, the dogmatic theory being that it ceases as soon as the "species" are destroyed —as they are destroyed, even the Catholic admits, by the gastric acids. Married people, too, are urged to be continent before communion. Everything that is possible is done to surround the sacrament with a proportionate solemnity; except, indeed, that here also the Roman Church would gain in dignity and effectiveness by surrendering the use of Latin formulæ in the communion.

How do the people respond to these efforts? and what is the actual moral gain to the average Catholic? There we have a problem of equal difficulty to that of the confessional. In this case there is no question, at least, of an actual corrupting influence on any side. The complaint that the Catholic communion lowers the dignity and effectiveness of the theistic idea by

too great a familiarity may be disregarded ; nor need we trouble about the fabulous doings of Parisian Satanists, who are said to steal hosts, and perpetrate inconceivable folly with them. But it cannot be questioned—and will not be a matter of surprise, I fancy—that a fairly large proportion of the Catholic communicants are not appreciably influenced by their communion. The vague feeling of gravity, possibly of reverence, that is momentarily excited passes quickly away, and leaves no trace on the disposition. These are the people who are the despair of every religion and idealist organisation, and it argues no defect in the Catholic communion service that it fails to make more than a momentary impression on their spirit. Rather may one say that if so concrete and near a force fails to affect them, they are little likely to be moved by the Incarnation, the Unitarian God, or other still more remote considerations. From the point of view of ethical discipline one cannot, at all events, quarrel with the law that forces them to kiss the ideal once in the year.

But when one rises above this level of practical materialism and religious obtuseness the Catholic Sacrament begins to appear as a potent moral force. Here again the Catholic system demands the presence of some moral disposition if it is to act at all ; but where this sensitiveness to its touch exists, and in proportion to its extent, it reacts on the moral disposition, and broadens or deepens it. In the

higher departments of Catholic religious life the Eucharist is seen to be the first support of the spirit. The growth of the feeling of reverence betrays itself in what seems at first to be a curious fashion. One of the commonest symptoms of spiritual advance in the Church of Rome is a desire to approach communion more frequently. The confessor is consulted, and under his direction the monthly communion becomes weekly, and the weekly becomes daily. In many Catholic congregations, as well as in religious houses, there are a few (generally women) who communicate daily. With a further advance in religious feeling the daily communion is often discontinued, in an excess of reverence for the sacrament. In Catholic hagiography one reads at times extraordinary stories of this sacrifice of the daily communion, in spite of a most ardent desire; and in the literature from which confessors seek guidance there are curious and protracted controversies on the point. But whether the communion be daily or bi-weekly, it is the cardinal event in the religious life of these higher devotees. The preparatory prayer begins on the preceding day, and is continued for hours before and after participating. In these cases there is no question of moral advantage in the usual sense of the word—such men and women living in an entirely transcendental world—but of what the Church calls spirituality, if not mysticism. From these exceptionally elevated characters one descends through every

conceivable degree of goodness to the unambitious crowd who, in their common phrase, will "be thankful if they get inside the gates." There is no need for me to endeavour to indicate with any precision the action of the communion on these many classes. On each, according to his spiritual capacity, the thought of receiving God within him has an uplifting effect, and brings him into more vital contact with the moral ideal than any other event or agency in his life.

I have already said a word about "Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament." On Sunday evenings (sometimes afternoons) during Benediction, on certain high festivals, and at the times of the Quarant' Ore and Corpus Christi, the Eucharist is taken from the tabernacle (where it is reserved in a silver pyx or a ciborium), and visibly exposed in a gold monstrance or *ostensorium*. This ceremony is partly theosophic and partly ethical. It is mainly devised for purposes of worship, but it has in a lesser degree the ethical advantages of the communion. It helps to bring home to the worshippers the thought of the nearness of God, and to inspire feelings of reverence and self-searching. The Mass is even less connected with our design, and may be briefly dismissed. The Mass is literally an act of sacrifice in the mind of the Church. The people do not take part in it; they assist at it. It is therefore predominantly an act of worship, and not a part of the Church's ethical

system. But it is clear that the law by which the Church strictly binds each Catholic to assist at Mass every Sunday must indirectly help its work of sanctification. It means that once a week at least a man *must* come under the action of its vivid symbolism.

CHAPTER V

THE ETHICS OF RITUAL

THE dramatic interaction of moral and theological feeling, which we have seen to be one of the most conspicuous features in the development of religion, is further complicated by the intervention of the artistic feeling. The question whether art should be retained in the service of the temple has from time out of mind evoked controversies no less impassioned than those which have arisen on the ethical and the philosophical sides of religion. The Puritan protest against Ritualist exuberance has found utterance in some of the greatest religious leaders the world has ever known; there are many who hold that all the higher and later religions were chiefly the outcome of such a protest. Yet, almost always, a vast and ornate structure of ritual has grown up about their memories. They have sunk into obscure graves, or graves that the very spirit they had enkindled forbade men to adorn, but few centuries have passed before gilded shrines have arisen, and the censer has once more spread its rich

odour over their real or imaginary bones. Compare the utterances of the prophets of Israel with later Jewish formalism, of Zoroaster (or the Zoroastrian writers of the Gathas) with Parseeism, of Buddha with Thibetan Buddhism, of Christ with the Christianity of the fifth century, and so on. It is only a few centuries since the Christian Church was rent in twain by a mighty convulsion that found its chief inspiration in Puritanism. We already mark the returning movement.[1]

Clearly we perceive here the operation of a deeply rooted instinct. The Protestant and the Rationalist who would trace this inevitable reintroduction of ritual to a sacerdotal policy consider only a narrow aspect of the matter. It is quite true that in a ritual religion the person of the priest tends to escape observation. In a Puritan system the worshippers lend little or no official dignity to the priest; his work must derive a value from his personal worth. But in proportion as a religious system develops a ceremonious cult, the personal dignity of the priest recedes behind the screen of

[1] I am not merely alluding to the revival of Ritualism in the Church of England. Churches which still bear aloft the banner of Protestantism are returning on their course. Two recent indications I have noticed in the religious press are, an attempt in the Wesleyan body to devise and popularise a moderate ritual, and the expression of a desire on the part of high officials in the other Free Churches to revive the ceremonious observance of Christmas and Good Friday. But no one who is familiar with the chapel of the Puritans or of the early Wesleyans can fail to see a gradual, but considerable, return.

what one may justly call dramatic representation. Rites and words gain an inherent worth, apart from personality. Yet it is a poor fallacy to urge that we may therefore look to priestly interest for the persistence of ritual religion. One need only recall the character of the men who stand for the revival of Ritualism in the English Church, or of some of the saints who have been conspicuously ritualistic in the Catholic Church. The Puritan and the Ritualist tendencies are, as M. Réville observed, equally natural and sincere. I well remember a high festival in our church of St. Antony at Forest Gate, when the orchestra was rendering Gounod's *Messe Solennelle*, whilst the sanctuary glittered with vestments of cloth of gold and manifold adornment. I played no part on that morning, and was merged in the crowd of worshippers and caught in the wave of intense religious feeling which was generated, as sense after sense was assailed with charming impulses. And just when, for us Catholics, the supreme moment of the ritual came, and the religious emotion was at its highest point, some sturdy Protestant in the church scornfully cried out: "Theatrical!" Probably he was as sincere and religious as we, yet our greatest elevation was the depth of his abyss. Nevertheless, you would find on careful analysis that the religious emotion of the Catholic is essentially the same as the feeling inspired by a Wesley or a Spurgeon; it is something entirely distinct from the sensual im-

pulses which lead up to it. The earnest Catholic emerges from the quick succession of intensely dramatic ceremonies of his Holy Week with a religious and moral fervour which differs little, either in quality or tension, from the fervour which his Wesleyan despiser obtains from his revival exercises.

However, it does not lie within my province to determine whether the Puritan or the Ritualist practice is the more effective. I have merely to explain the ritual elements of the Catholic system and point out the ways in which they contribute to its ethical discipline. And first I have to note that the ethical service of these ritual elements is almost wholly indirect. Art enters the temple as a servant, but it always does enter. The Puritan, who imagines that he cultivates religion without the aid of art, in reality only throws a proportionately larger burden on one particular form of art—oratory — when he rejects the influence of music and colour. Every religion (whether theistic or non-theistic) has its ministers and those to whom they minister. In Puritan forms of religion the ministry takes almost exclusively the form of oratorical stimulation. The Catholic position is that the other arts may be employed in the service of the ideal as freely as the art of the orator. But the Catholic Church never loses sight of its design merely to use artistic agencies as means to obtain a higher end. The admirer of the Catholic cult who discovers an end in itself in the complex sensuous

thrill which its ritual elements engender—whether he cherish the nebulous "religions" of George Moore and Huysmann or belong to the purely æsthetic groups that foregather at Farm Street and Brompton —has no sanction and no encouragement in the Church's teaching. That teaching is perfectly clear. As the Rationalist frequently forgets in his comments on ritual "narcotics," and as the spiritual hedonist conveniently ignores, it puts in the first and supreme place the theistic and the moral ideal. The aim of its ceremonious system is to ensure the worship of God and the sanctification of men. It therefore postulates a practical recognition of the duty of worship and of self-sanctification. Its ritual system is then wholly directed to that quickening of the religious emotions which is the second aim of every religion—theistic or non-theistic—under the sun. No religious or ethical system could be content to inform the mind only; in few men does the Herbartian theory that emotions are a proportionate reflex of ideas find a practical justification. The heart must be stimulated; and the Catholic Church has gathered up in its ceremonious structure the thousand æsthetic and dramatic impulses which the religious experience of humanity has found suitable for that purpose. It employs the ministry of the singer and the musician, of light and colour and fragrance and sculpture and symbolic movement. And since, as I have pointed out, the two aspects of its chief purpose—the worship

of God and the sanctification of men—are usually commensurate, we are bound to find an ethical aim and some ethical effect throughout its ritual system.

This is at once perceived when we consider in detail some of its most familiar ritual elements. Of these perhaps music is the most prominent, and here the judgment of the race has been clearly expressed. Only a few sects that still lay a disproportionate stress on the negative side of Protestantism conduct their services without the aid of music. With humanity at large it is a question merely of degree and quality, not of principle, and the sterner Puritan protest is visibly relaxing. The hymn, indeed, has almost invariably represented the ministry of sound; it is as important in the ethical congregation of to-day as it was in the sober Puritan assembly of three centuries ago. Even singing by professional musicians, in which the congregation has no part, has now an admitted place in religious and quasi-religious gatherings. How far one may carry the principle—whether one may approve the emasculated singers of a papal choir, or the employment of professional singers of hostile beliefs (or no beliefs) by the average wealthy Catholic church, and so on—is a point of earnest controversy amongst Catholics themselves. Undoubtedly these practices promote the beauty and decorum and effectiveness of the services; undoubtedly, too, there is a tendency to exaggerate the æsthetic ideal at the expense of higher considerations.

The officials of the Church interfere not infrequently. I remember Cardinal Vaughan gravely censuring the Jesuits at Manchester (where his brother was superior) from their own pulpit on a great festival for advertising their singers and repertory. There was also an inquiry instituted (from Rome) throughout the Church some years ago as to the possibility of substituting the plain chant everywhere for the more florid music, but it was evidently found impossible to interfere. There is the same problem on the instrumental side. Puritanism itself has long ago advanced from the timid harmonium to the lordly organ. Here it remains for the time, pronouncing the swell of the organ "religious" and the thrill of the orchestra or the violin "worldly." I cannot but think this is a compromise with a prejudice. Catholic experience finds the orchestra no less stimulating to the strictly religious emotions than the organ, though there is a widespread feeling against the greatly advertised performances at the Italian and similar churches. The Catholic practice merely carries on the religious tradition of the world. The ministry of music in the ancient Hebrew religion, and in the temples of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, is well known. When the Emperor of China offers the most solemn sacrifices of his national religion, an orchestra of two hundred and thirty-four musicians stimulates the emotions of the worshippers.

The use of incense and candles is less interesting

from the ethical point of view. Both these ritual elements are found in widely separated religions. The Chinese priests and worshippers burn great numbers of sticks of incense on their religious festivals, and the Thibetan Buddhists swing it in five-chained thuribles which are singularly like those used in Catholic worship. The Mexicans and Peruvians burned on brasiers large quantities of odorous gums in their ceremonies. The Mithraists, who offered so disconcerting a rivalry to the early Christians, conducted their services in a perfect gloom of incense fumes, through which the blaze of innumerable tapers could be discerned. Wax tapers were a prominent feature in the Roman cult of Saturn and in the religion of ancient Egypt. The emotional agency of these ritual principles has thus been long and widely recognised. Yet it would seem that these are ritual elements that may one day disappear from the temple, like the sacred dance and drama. Even the Catholic Church makes only a restricted use of them. No one who is acquainted with Catholic services can have failed to notice that they are only employed, in any large measure, in connection with the adoration of the Sacrament. Two or six tapers are usually lit for a Catholic service, but it is only when the Sacrament is exposed that the altar bears its great burden of candelabra and the censers fill the sanctuary with their mystic fumes. Sometimes a special altar of the Virgin

presents a brilliant appearance, but it is on the great feasts of the Eucharists that the Catholic sanctuary becomes one blaze of lighted tapers. The object of such displays is obvious enough, and finds justification enough in the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist. The huge system of artistically arranged tapers, centring about the throne on which the host is displayed, becomes a powerful stimulus and aid to the imagination of the believer. The Catholic no more thinks of the symbolic meaning ascribed to the lighted taper by the theologian (who regards it as a symbol of life) than he thinks of its primitive meaning in earlier religions. But the larger displays stimulate the religious imagination, if not the religious emotions, and must be counted as effective ritual elements. The use of incense is less easy to understand. The Catholic Church does not deliberately employ it, as the Chinese do, for its sensuous and emotional agency. Except on the occasion of solemn processions of the Sacrament, it is only burned in the sanctuary, and is not prescribed in any quantity. A pound will last some months in the average church. The small direct effect on the worshippers seems to be unintended, and the fragrant fumes to be regarded as a mark and service of honour.[1]

[1] In view of the "lights" controversy in the Church of England, it may be noted that the Roman Church explicitly rejects the idea of illumination in the use of candles. This is clear from its refusal to allow the substitution of ornamental gas-jets on the altar. It also directs that

The use of flowers is directed by the same thoughts as the use of lighted tapers and incense. Their fragrance rarely reaches the worshippers, though their graces of colour and form help to quicken the emotions. Chiefly they are regarded as marks of respect to the Sacrament, or to the saint whose altar they adorn, and they thus tend to stimulate that feeling in the worshippers. But the indirect ministry of flowers needs no emphasis. They are a ritual element that adds grace and effectiveness to every ethical and idealist ceremony. Just before the Spaniards came to stamp out the quaint and crude and sanguinary religion of Mexico, a humanist or ethical movement began to work at its reform from within. A Mexican prince built a new temple, from which all hideous polytheistic images and all bloody sacrifices were excluded. He directed that the ministry of flowers should be the chief element in its ritual. Ethical societies are spontaneously adopting this element of ritual.

a certain number at least of the tapers shall be of pure wax. There is a curious survival of the older ritual use of light in the service on Holy Saturday. All lights in the church have been extinguished two days previously, and on the Saturday morning fresh fire is struck by flint and steel, from which all are relighted. This is a most ancient custom, and formerly extended to all lights in the community—the god of light or fire being regarded as contaminated after twelve months on earth. The Mexicans religiously observed the ceremony. The Chinese suppressed its civic extension in the fifth century, but its memory (or the memory of the two days of cold meat) lives in the hard coloured eggs which the Chinese still play with, as our own fathers did, on Easter-day. The lamp that burns constantly in the Catholic sanctuary is an indication of the presence of the Sacrament.

The question of the use of vestments must obviously have a large place in any discussion of Catholic ritual. It is, perhaps, needless to point out that the practice of wearing distinctive garments at ceremonial times is almost as old as sacerdotalism. The directions of the Old Testament as to the vesture of the Jewish priests are familiar; and it is certain that the captive Hebrews had witnessed a high development of this ritual element in ancient Babylon. The Persian, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman priests were decked with equal splendour. Nor do we find the instinct less developed when we turn aside from the main stream of religious evolution to the systems of China and ancient Mexico, which it is so interesting to compare with the Catholic system. The priests of Mexico were at all times obliged to wear a distinctive costume, either black or white, but on ceremonial occasions they wore brightly coloured garments. The Chinese have evolved vestments curiously like those of the Catholic priest. Père Huc, the early Jesuit missionary, observed that the Buddhist and Taoist priest had "dalmatics, chasubles, and copes." Even in the national religion, whose priests are the civic and imperial officials, gorgeous silken robes are donned when sacrifice is offered. Clearly, we must recognise here a legitimate inspiration of the religious instinct. Those who have had experience in the sacristy and the sanctuary know how true it is that an almost feminine vanity is developed in this depart-

ment of sacerdotal life, yet it is ridiculous to affect to discover the real origin of the wearing of vestments in any such human frailty. Quite recently reports have come from America that several Protestant clergymen have donned scarlet robes or other distinctive costumes during service, in order to attract the laggard worshippers. Possibly we should find it widely true that it is the congregations rather than the clergy who have created the vestments. Most certainly no Catholic congregation of our day would like to see its officiating clergy abandon their distinctive garments. Moreover, the Catholic Church puts a spiritual significance on the vestments for the priest which is almost unknown to the people. Writers on the ritual[1] indicate a good deal of symbolism in the garments, but this is entirely lost upon the people. It is, however, forcibly recalled to the priest's attention every time he puts on the vestments. He is bound to recite a series of short prayers, one for each vestment, in which the symbolism is prettily expressed. Thus, in putting on the white girdle, he must repeat: "Gird me, O Lord, with a girdle of purity," and so forth.

Then, one may point to a feature of this portion of the Catholic ritual which has a very clear idealist or spiritual force. I allude to the change of colours in

[1] I may note that the work chiefly recommended by Catholics to those who would inquire more closely into their ritual is O'Kane's *Notes on Rubrics of Roman Ritual.*

harmony with the character of the festival. The white linen garments—the alb, amice, and girdle—are constant (though on higher festivals they have great depths of lace or rich embroidery), but the coloured stole, maniple, and chasuble (as well as the veil of the chalice, the tabernacle-veils, and the antependium, or movable front of a wooden altar) vary from day to day. The black drapery of a dead mass is expressive enough. Red is worn in honour of a martyr or—a conventional choice—of the Holy Spirit. White is prescribed for the Christ-feasts (except the Passion), feasts of the Virgin, and the festivals of virgins and confessors (or all saints who are not martyrs). Purple is the Lenten colour, deepening on Good Friday into a universal black. Green is worn when no special festival in honour of saint or mystery occurs, and the mass is read *de feria* or *de dominica*.[1] Gold may be substituted for any colour in the *ordo* except black. The spiritual force of this almost daily change of colours is obvious. It helps to prevent the monotony which is so apt to reduce a daily service to

[1] The breviary and the missal give an "office" or a mass (respectively) for each day of the year. When, however, the feast of a saint or the commemoration of a mystery occurs this takes precedence. In the ordinary calendar of the Church many days are found without such special commemorations, and then the office and mass are said to be *de dominica* (if it is a Sunday) or *de feria*, and green is worn at mass. The calendars of the monastic orders have few green days, they having the privilege of saying the full mass or office in honour of saints of their orders, whom the secular priest merely "commemorates" in a short prayer.

a mere formality, and to enforce the ethical and spiritual ideas which are embodied in different classes of festivals.

Apart from this somewhat dramatic play of colour, one must recognise in the use of vestments a legitimate concession to a far-reaching popular instinct. That the anti-ritualist generally insists that his ministers shall wear some other distinctive and less pretty costume—as a "suit of solemn black"—is a trite observation; but it is less frequently noticed that he approves a large use of vestments in other departments of social life. "Vestment" means, literally, merely an article of dress; ritually, it means a distinctive dress for specific purposes. What else, then, can we see in the official robes of king and queen, judge and barrister, mayor and alderman, nurse, policeman, soldier, or sailor? The principle is as broad as our social life. And if we carefully follow the idea which accounts for the use of "vestments" in all these cases, we shall conclude that it is found in the highest degree in the ministry of worship. We may, indeed, complain that the Catholic Church is excessively conservative and unthinking in this part of its ritual. The maniple, for instance, should have been abolished long ago. It is a piece of heavily embroidered silk that dangles at the priest's left elbow. Writers on ritual tell us that it represents the handkerchief which the celebrant once tied to his left arm for very prosaic purposes.

It has developed, by progressive embroidery, into a heavy ornament, which gravely impedes the action of the priest and has more than once upset the consecrated elements. The handkerchief is now slipped through the girdle, but the maniple remains. So it is with the "humeral veil," a kind of shawl or silken wrap that is put over the shoulders of the deacon at mass, or of the priest at benediction. It is merely a shrunken relic of the veil that was drawn across the sanctuary in the early Church. A dozen such incongruities could be pointed out in the Catholic system, lingering on like the atrophied organs and muscles in the human body. Yet it must be granted that the people see little or nothing of these matters. Very few Catholics, even amongst the clergy, ever consider the vestments in detail. The general effect is alone regarded. It suffices for priest and people that the wearing of vestments contributes to the impressiveness of the ceremonies—in other words, helps to deepen the emotions in regard to the spiritual and moral ideal which the preacher builds up in their minds.

The Catholic system no longer includes a ritual element of great antiquity and popularity which is known as the sacred dance. M. Saussaye says that many writers regard the dance as the oldest form of worship, and M. Réville considers it the primitive "communion." It is well known how generally the dance has been looked upon as a sacred element in

earlier stages of development. The delirium which it causes was very early considered to be a visitation of the god, and the oracles pronounced in such a condition were greatly treasured. Not only such groups as the dancing Dervishes and fanatical Shamans, but even Christian sects, such as the Shakers and some Russian sects,[1] bring the tradition down to our own days. Sacred dancing was so common at Rome—compare the dancing of the Salii and the Bacchantes, and the licentious dances on the feasts of Cybele and Flora—that the Christian Church inevitably adopted it into its ritual. There was special provision for dancing in the early Churches, and on great feasts of the martyrs the dance degenerated into a whole night of license (so St. Ambrose and St. Augustine affirm), and professional dancers (pantomimes) were hired from the theatre. The fathers, some of whom at first took quite a religious view of the dance, soon came to condemn it, but the sacred dance was a familiar feature in the mediæval Church. It was not until after the middle of the eighteenth century that the Church succeeded in suppressing it entirely; though in a milder form it is still found in the cathedral of Seville. In China the dance is still an important element of ritual. A ballet of 234 dancers (and orchestra of 234 musicians) accompanies the solemn sacrifices offered by the emperor. In Mexico and

[1] See N. Tsakni's *La Russie Sectaire.*

Peru the dance was greatly practised. In Mexico the dance was not infrequently imposed as a "penance" after confession. One has only to imagine the imposing of such a penance on the Catholic young lady of to-day to realise the curious degeneration of this ritual element. The sacred drama has fallen into similar disrepute. Even at Oberammergau the religious drama finds shelter in a theatre—not a church. A rich Chinese family still engages a theatrical troupe on the occasion of a solemn festival.

The place of the dance and the drama is now occupied in the Catholic ritual by the procession. The Catholic procession is a most elaborate and manifold and effective ceremony, in which all the ritual elements are employed. There were innumerable examples before the eyes of the Christian leaders when they came to organise their ritual, yet it cannot be questioned that the Catholic use of the procession exhibits its finest capacities. In the great processions which the traveller witnesses in China to-day there is much secular gaiety but little idealist purpose. There are priests in flowing silken robes and aspersions with holy water and shaven monks and sacred banners and lighted tapers and clouds of incense and hands uplifted in benediction. But—unless a serious drought or plague gives point to the ceremony—the crowd is chiefly in a mood of enjoyment, and fires its millions of crackers without much thought even of scaring demons. In

Mexico and Peru, where, also, the great processions bore a striking resemblance to those of Catholicism, the ceremony was far more serious; not paper figures were borne to the fires, but young babes and the sweetest maidens in the city were led to the awful embraces of their divine spouses by the ruthless priests.[1] The great processions of Rome and Greece and Egypt were well known to the early Christians, and are sufficiently known to the reader. It was inevitable that the Christian Church should very quickly adopt this form of ritual. Harnack says that "for a considerable period Christianity possessed no ritual at all," and very little ritualistic power "until the end of the second century."[2] But even before it emerged from the caves and catacombs solemn processions were amongst its most striking ceremonies. Newman gives a beautiful description of one in his *Callista*. With the development of the procession through the Middle Ages I have no concern. The processions which are now sanctioned or enjoined by the Church have usually a high spiritual value, and only rarely seek to afford the merely sensuous gratification which was so often aimed at in the older religions. These are usually of two kinds—processions of the Blessed Sacrament and processions in honour of Mary. The procession

[1] Yet these priests had, next door to the sheds in which they kept the bones of slaughtered infants, hospitals in which they tended the sick with the greatest care and humanity.

[2] *History of Dogma*, i. 331.

of the Sacrament is frequently directed in the liturgy (the chief occasion being the feast of Corpus Christi), and in a church of average resources is an impressive ceremony. The host is borne (in its "monstrance") by the celebrant under a silken canopy, whilst two thurifers immediately precede, and frequently a group of children in white, scattering flowers. The body of the procession is formed according to the resources of the church. The congregation is, on the whole, visibly impressed and bent in deep reverence as the host passes. In Catholic countries the procession goes through the town on the occasion of the *Fête Dieu*, and becomes a civic ceremony. The houses are decorated with a respectful gaiety, the military are pressed into service, and the civic functionaries take official part in the ceremony. A good deal of this respect is forced and insincere (as I was able to see at Louvain), but the ethical student will turn to such ceremonies with sympathy after reading of the orgiastic commemorations of Bacchus and Cybele, or the sinister processions that wound about the slopes of the Mexican pyramid-temples, or even what Gibbon calls "the humane license of the Saturnalia," or the still more harmless festivals of the Chinese. In the processions of the Virgin the piety of the faithful is less severe than in the presence of the Sacrament. These processions usually take place in May (the "month of Mary") and October (the "rosary month"). In Lancashire (as in Catholic

countries) the May procession is one of the events of the year for the Catholic children, most of whom have filmy white dresses and other finery for the occasion. The secular element enters largely here; yet, as Mary is the symbol and embodiment of purity in the Catholic mind, these processions are not without a spiritual force. The sermons on such occasions are full of the symbolism of the ceremony. On the Continent, where these processions are organised on a magnificent scale in honour of the miraculous statues and shrines which abound in Catholic countries, the ethical effect is largely lost in the invasion of secular and commercial feeling. Even the most Liberal (*i.e.* free-thinking) municipality (as I observed at Hasselt, in Belgium) enters ardently into such celebrations.

The moment, indeed, that one enters upon a psychological dissection of the procession, one begins to lose sight of its spiritual force. The Puritan who could enter closely into such ceremonies—from the stage side, as it were—would find ample grounds to support his protest. Between vanity and an anxiety about technical propriety, there can be few of those who take part in the Catholic processions that derive any spiritual advantage from them. The procession must be regarded objectively. However large it may be, it is always followed by crowds of witnesses or worshippers, and it is for these that it has a stimulating force. Involving, as it does, nearly every

element of ritual, it quickens the emotions of the observers. And since, in the procession both of the Sacrament and of the statue of the Virgin, a high ethical ideal is directly or indirectly brought to the mind, the ceremony takes a legitimate place in the Catholic ethical discipline.

It is in this mood that we must examine the many other ceremonies in which the Catholic Church makes so stirring a use of its ritual elements. I shall have other aspects of the Catholic services to consider in a later chapter, and will be content here barely to point the moral of their ritualist character. The Mass, the one ceremony which the Catholic is bound to attend every week,[1] is the most familiar of these services. We are told that the name "mass" (*missa*) applied to a large number of ceremonies in the early Church, but was soon restricted to the one in which the priest (or deacon) finally "dis-misses" the worshippers with the formula: "Ite, *missa* est." To the solemn and essential parts of this service only the fully initiated believers were then admitted. The stranger may now witness it any morning in a Catholic chapel, but will probably find little enlightenment. It would obviously be beyond my aim to enter into the details of the ceremony here. I will

[1] The Church enjoins attendance at one Mass every Sunday under pain of mortal sin (or penalty of eternal damnation for grave disobedience). As the Mass is only said in the morning—it must never be *commenced* after midday—this amounts to an obligation to go to church every Sunday morning, as we shall see.

only point out the conception of it that reconciles the Catholic to its Latin form (which I do not think the Church will ever abandon in this case), and sustains its spiritual force in spite of that form. The mass is a sacrifice offered by the priest—an act, therefore, in which the people can have no part. They cannot join with him in the consecration of the sacred elements and the offering of them, which is the essence of the mass. He addresses God throughout, and in phrases that they cannot share; the tongue he uses is his concern or that of the Church. The people can but join in adoring the host—and to this they are impelled by the solemn pause and the loud ring of the bell or the sonorous warning of the gong at the elevation—and in receiving the sacrament in communion. All the other prayers and ritual acts of the mass form the priest's preparation or thanksgiving for these solemn privileges. To the people, therefore, the essence of the mass is that Christ is bodily present on the altar; and the liturgical splendour and dramatic procedure of the ceremony greatly assist them to appreciate this. The Catholic of average faith and thoughtfulness cannot attend his "bloody and damnable sacrifice" without being the better for it; to the very devout it is a breath from the Hesperides. Moreover, the Catholic prayer-book contains a translation of the constant elements of the mass-liturgy (often, especially for children, with a series of pictures of the priest's movements), so that

the worshipper may follow it with complete intelligence if he will. He is not bound to attend specifically to more than the consecration and communion (when the gong is struck), and may say his "rosary" or any other prayers.

The Sunday evening service, at which attendance is optional, usually consists of three parts—Vespers (or Compline, or the Rosary), a sermon, and Benediction. Vespers, or Evensong, is familiar enough from the Church of England practice. In the Catholic Church it is always in Latin, and may vary with the calendar, for it is taken from the priest's breviary. In many churches the service is taken always from the office of the Virgin. Compline is a similar group of psalms and hymns from the breviary. The prayer-book contains a translation of these, so that they may be followed intelligently. I doubt if this is done to a large extent, and expect that in time this part of the service will be sung in English, as it should be. On the higher festivals these services are clothed with a good deal of solemnity and ritual splendour—the cantors (or leaders of the choir on the altar) may have gorgeous copes, the priests have assistant deacon and subdeacon, and the altar be richly decorated. Vespers and Compline are not services of great devotional power for the laity on ordinary occasions; when the more solemn ritual is followed they obtain that vague and indirect spiritual value which we have recognised in all ritual usage. The sermon will

occupy us in a later chapter. The Benediction is one of the most distinctively Catholic services, and it shares the moral force which we must find in all the Eucharistic ceremonies. The host is taken from the tabernacle and placed (in its golden, or silver-gilt, monstrance) on the high throne above, for the adoration of the people. The liturgy calls the ceremony "Exposition," not "Benediction," as the popular custom has it. Several Latin hymns or litanies (in which the congregation joins and of which the substance is generally understood) are then sung, and the priest finally blesses the people with the host. The ritual aims at deepening the thought of the presence of the Deity in the people's mind. When the "Benediction" closes a long period of "Exposition," and the more elaborate liturgy is followed, it becomes a ceremony of great impressiveness. But, of course, both Mass and Benediction, the two chief Roman ceremonies, derive their ethical force from the belief in the Real Presence. I am studying them in the Catholic system, and in relation to that belief, not on the broader plane of idealist ceremony.

Other Catholic services in which the ritual element is less pronounced, such as the Rosary or the Way of the Cross, will be considered presently, and the next chapter will deal with the more solemn festivals of the Roman Church. I would here, in conclusion, succinctly repeat the argument of the present chapter. I have not attempted in any degree to contribute

towards the solution of the actual ritualist controversy. I have not concerned myself either with the rational or the scriptural worth of the dogmas which inspire the larger part of the Catholic ritual structure, and people too frequently forget that it is at bottom a question of belief, not practice. But I have recorded my experience and observation of the spiritual force of the Catholic ritual, where, and in proportion as, the dogmas which it sets forth are sincerely held. The "narcotic theory" of ritualism is a mistake. Ritual presupposes beliefs and ideals, which the preacher and the writer must cultivate. Its aim is to enkindle or inflame the emotions, in direct relation to religious ideals. It seems impossible rationally to deny the service of art in this matter, whatever conception we have of "religion." Dissociated from religion art rapidly ceases to exert its higher functions, and becomes mere entertainment; for one *Parsifal* or *Faust* we get a hundred *Carmens* and comic operas. The older Puritans consistently recognised this. Why should not the irresistible power of art be directed to the service of the frail and tenuous ideal that beckons humanity onward? But that is ritual. And if it be written in the decrees of fate that the olden dogmas that inspire the Catholic ritual are to pass away—and with them the actual liturgy must pass away—it is probable that when the strain of the reaction has ceased men will build up a new ritual in harmony with the new forms of the ideal.

CHAPTER VI

THE CALENDAR

THE use of a calendar in every spiritual organisation points to a quality of human nature which has been admirably elucidated in the recent progress of thought. Whatever we may make of the nature of the mind, its life is wholly bound up with the nerve-thrills of its material tenement. Refine enthusiasm for an ideal as we may, it rises and falls with the response of the nerve and brain to sensuous impulses. Ritual and liturgy have been created by the perception of this truth. But the oft-repeated stimulus ceases to inspire. The daily Mass and the weekly Benediction lose their force as fatally as the opiate. This is in perfect accord with all that the modern psychologist tells us about human nature. There are paths in the nervous system, along which the mind has communicated with outer nature for countless ages—the paths which conduct the impulses of animal and vegetative life. Along these well-worn paths the spirit of man moves freely—*facilis descensus Averni.* It is only, comparatively,

in recent times that the higher realm of the ideal has opened out to the mind, and the nerve-paths along which its regenerating impulses run are less smooth and facile. Only the alert and determined spirit habitually walks in the new paths of mind. Most of us need a constant stimulation if our lives are not to sink wholly into the broad and trodden channels. Moreover, on the theory of morality which has been so deeply impressed on the mind of most people, there is no tangible gain or loss to keep us alert to the higher life, as with the impulses of hunger or maintenance. The calendar provides this needful stimulus. By a formal arrangement that shall ensure its application, yet at intervals wide enough to prevent familiarity, it brings before us periodically the ideas and ideals which we hold to be of highest worth.

No doubt the calendar has only discovered this high spiritual function after ages of less elevated use. There were many influences at work in the making and the consecration of the calendar. Even so long ago that men had too narrow and dim a perception to trace the path of the sun, a beginning was made with the calendar. At least men could not but perceive the effect of the sun's yearly kiss of the great earth-mother. Regularly she hid her charms and refused her gifts in the fading light. Regularly, too, she cast off her heavy winter raiment, and unfolded her graces and showered her gifts with a lover's gladness. Men

soon saw that it was the kiss of the sun that effected all this, and the great nature festivals began—the festivals that form the backbone of the calendar to our own day. Then gradually the priests, who were the sages and the astronomers of those early days, traced the outline of the vast dial of the heavens and the sun's path across it, and drew up a calendar. And when the polytheistic period came, they used the calendar to ensure that each deity had a due measure of worship each year. The cycles of the moon gave subdivisions, and the list of festivals increased. Finally came the ethical and the biblical monotheistic religions, and the calendar was retained in form, though its details were purified and idealised. It became the instrument for presenting the higher ideals of men in all their varied aspects, as well as for securing a due recognition of the sacred mysteries, which we find it to be in the ethical religions of our day.

The calendar is thus one of the oldest spiritual treasures that Christianity has inherited, and one that —witness the constitution of Positivism—it will consign to its own religious heirs. That it has proved an effective instrument of ethical discipline in the hands of the Roman Church cannot seriously be questioned. Perhaps the highest testimony to this is found in the recent efforts of Free Churchmen to restore much of it that their fathers had rejected. It is, therefore, of moment, as well as of interest, to examine how the

Church of Rome has used the calendar idea which it adopted from the old Roman religion. The general usefulness of a calendar is so obvious that we may pass at once to a detailed study of the Catholic calendar; and indeed it is only in this detailed scrutiny that we discover the immense moral superiority of the Catholic calendar over the pagan calendars with which it is so often associated with contempt. By pointing out, as I go along, the pagan analogies to the Catholic festivals, I may show at once the justice of the association and the injustice of the contemptuous mood which it so often engenders.

It must have perplexed many a thoughtful observer to see how little ethical force is extracted by the experienced Church of Rome from the New Year festival. Here is, it will be readily agreed, one of the finest psychological moments and one of the most valuable moral opportunities of the whole year. Yet the Church of Rome deliberately hides away this natural treasure behind an unattractive festival—the feast of the Circumcision. Compare the Chinese festival of the New Year, which falls about the close of our January. For five days the Chinaman maintains his festival with every kind of sacred and secular rejoicing. He does not sleep on the vigil of the New Year. In the early dawn he spreads his domestic altar with the richest gifts, and commences the long festivity. But even the unaustere and unspiritual Chinaman has grasped the meaning of the hour.

The spirits of his ancestors, he says, have gone to report to the high gods on the conduct and fortunes of the family. It is a day of reckoning. On the last day of the feast they return to the house, and on that day the turning over of a new leaf in life's records is very forcibly dramatised. All brushes have been religiously suspended for five days. Now they plunge into action with remarkable vigour. It is a day of energetic sweeping and brushing and scouring of property and person—a "grand balayage des corps et des esprits," M. Réville calls it; for cleanliness is nearer to godliness than even our old English proverb suspected.[1]

How came the Church of Rome to neglect this precious lesson of the earlier religions? The truth is that the Roman ecclesiastical year does not begin at the same time as the civil year, or the calendar of any of the earlier religions. It opens on November 1st, with the feast of All Saints, as will be seen at a glance into the missal or the breviary. For once the Church has proudly shaken herself free of the bonds of ancient usage which have so generally held her. But the price of the emancipation is discord between the Church and the world. The world has gone on its way, celebrating the opening of its new year with a purely secular rejoicing; and the ecclesiastical new

[1] Flügel observes that the Hebrew and Zend words for "morality" properly signify "bodily cleanliness." In many of the nature-religions the cleansing from sin is effected or accompanied by washes, vapour baths, purgatives, emetics, blood-letting, and so forth.

year is barely appreciated even by the priest. It is true that an almost inarticulate counsel finds its way about amongst the faithful at the (civil) new year, exhorting them to begin with a special confession and communion and renewal of high purposes; but the Church has no official message, for its year is already two months advanced. Had it assigned to that date its midnight mass, or its annual obligatory confession and communion, it would have carried on the world's tradition with its customary enlightenment.

Apart from this question of commencement—and it is worth noting that in the one particular in which it conspicuously departs from "pagan" tradition it loses more than it gains — the Roman calendar is largely modelled on a world-wide tradition. The Nativity, Easter, and Pentecost, are the three great festivals of the year; and they have been (especially the first two) the chief dates in the calendars of most of the great religions. M. Saussaye observes that "Christian festivals coincide with the times of the old heathen nature-festivals, and many a popular custom at Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide owes its origin to them."[1] The feasts of St. John and St. Michael, which were once the next in popular Christian appreciation, coincide with the two next in popularity in the earlier religions—the feasts of the summer solstice and the autumnal equinox, as Christmas and Easter correspond to the more striking

[1] *Manual of the Science of Religion*, p. 172.

festivals of the winter solstice and the vernal equinox. On these points really hangs the chain of minor festivals, or of festivals which have only crept into high favour with the course of time. If we glance simultaneously at the older festivals and their Christian regeneration, we shall see at once the upward growth of religious traditions.

Many Christian scholars (as, notably, Dr. Lightfoot) now think that, if we are to accept the details given in the Gospels, Christ cannot have been born about the date we know as December 25th. His birth-festival was celebrated at different dates (chiefly on January 6th or at Easter) in the second century, and the Western Church had only a vague and late rumour of a tradition for its choice of December 25th, which it succeeded in urging upon the whole Church in the third century. The truth is that that date, or a contiguous one, was most widely celebrated already in the Roman world as the birth of a saviour-god, and it was entirely expedient to assign the celebration of Christ's unknown birthday to it. How the Romans held their merry Saturnalia at that time (from December 17th to 24th), and had their little fir trees hung with wax tapers and tiny dolls, as Virgil sings, and loaded their children with presents (especially dolls), is a familiar story. The Greeks were no less merry over the celebration of the birthday of Dionysus, and have bequeathed us a Bacchic tradition of the date which we could spare. The

Greeks on that date exhibited a figure of their infant-god lying in a *liknon*, which is both basket and manger in Greece. The Egyptian temples (as we read in the *Chronicon Paschale*) also exhibited a figure of their infant-saviour, Horus, whose birthday they then celebrated. Horus was represented in the manger in which he was born, according to the legend, with the virgin-mother, Isis, by his side, and figures of the sacred animals behind. The Babylonian Tammuz and the Persian Mithra were honoured with birth-festivals on that date. And far away in the bleak north and in the leafless forests of Germany our own ancestors celebrated with more sober and religious joy their great Yule (or "winter") festival, the birth of their sun-god; from them we have learned to wreathe our homes and temples with glad evergreens and hang up the mistletoe and serve the boar's head and many another quaint ceremony. It seems irresistibly evident that the nativity-feast was held on or about December 25th—one could not expect a precise determination of the re-ascent of the sun in those early days—long before the wonderful Aryan race set forth on its momentous dispersion, long before the foundations of Egypt and Chaldæa were laid.

The Christian Church thus encountered the mid-winter festival in every land, and was virtually forced to set aside the date for the celebration of the birth of Christ. I have not to discuss here how far it

succeeded in the fourth century, or in any succeeding age until our own day, in purifying the world-old festival. The Christmas celebration of the modern Roman Church is, where material resources permit a generous fulfilment of the liturgy, a very imposing ceremony. A solemn High Mass[1] is sung at midnight, with orchestral or other unusual accompaniment. After the mass the veils are removed from a natural-size representation of the birth in the stable, which has been erected in some corner of the church. Catholic tradition attributes this pious artifice to the zeal of St. Francis of Assisi, but, of course, it has survived from the older religions. Then the worshippers retire for a few hours, to return for the purpose of hearing a second mass (and most probably communicating) between six and eleven. Each priest says three masses on Christmas-day, and the series closes with a second solemn high mass at eleven. Brief sermons give point to the liturgical splendour at each high mass. Catholic churches rarely hold service in the evening of that day. They conclude the impressive religious celebration with a brief Benediction service after the

[1] There are three types of mass-celebration. The *low mass* is the brief ordinary mass, without singing. A *sung mass* is one in which the priest sings the prayers and other parts (the choir singing the rest), but has no deacon or subdeacon. In the *high mass* these ministers are added, and they sing the gospel and epistle respectively. On occasion an assistant priest in cope may be added, and the ceremony increases in liturgical spendour as the celebrant ascends the scale of the hierarchy.

mass or in the afternoon, and dismiss the people to the sober merriment of their domestic festivals. I do not see why the Catholic should resent the comparison of his Christmas with the birth festivals of earlier religions. Ethically, it rises high above most of the older festivals, though there is good reason to think the Mithraic and the Isiac celebrations in the Roman world of the fourth century were little less elevated. The altitude of the Christian festival is measured by the altitude of its conception of the sanctity of God and the importance of human sanctification. Its fourth-century rivals had conceptions of regeneration which appealed no less strongly to the better minds of the time.[1]

Between Christmas and Lent the only festival of note in the Roman calendar is the Purification of the Virgin, or Candlemas-day. I will consider presently the general merit of the cult of the Virgin, but may note in passing that, although this celebration is of restricted observance nowadays, it takes the place

[1] For this reason, that the good I recognise in the Catholic celebration is entirely proportioned to its moral conception, I have no sympathy with Professor Haeckel's opinion (expressed in a note to the German edition of *Die Welträthsel*) that in time the cultured world, abandoning all the supernatural elements of Christmas, Easter, etc., will revert to the older naturalist festivals (birth and death of the sun, etc.). That would indeed be a devolution. French rationalism has recently been protesting, through the pen of M. Urbain Gohier, against our universal retention of the old calendar. It is difficult as yet to see what commemoration could be advantageously substituted for the world-old nativity-festival, amongst those who would cultivate religion without supernatural doctrines.

of one of the great "heathen" festivals. The ritual peculiarity of the feast is that candles are distributed from the altar to all the congregation, and these are lighted and held up during the more solemn parts of the mass. The idea of the "purification" (the Jewish "churching") of Mary has little spiritual force of itself. But the ritual is of notable interest and antiquity. In many religions a feast of lamps or candles occurs about that time. The famous Chinese feast of lanterns, when the temples and whole towns and villages are ablaze with the tapers, lanterns, and fires, occurs in February. A more significant parallel was the old Egyptian feast of lamps, which was celebrated in February in honour of Neith, the virgin-mother of Osiris.

When we pass to the commemoration of the death of Christ, with the long period of preliminary mourning and the splendid rebound of the Easter rejoicing, we are once more amidst a group of most ancient celebrations. Our English title for Resurrection-day reminds us that our Teutonic fathers had a similar series of fasts and festivals long before they encountered the faith of Rome. Ostara or Eostre was the mother of the saviour-god, whose death they mourned in the spring. And when we ascend to the level of civilised or semi-civilised religion, we find the ceremony in the most widely distant systems. I have already mentioned the Mexican and Chinese parallels of the curious Roman custom of lighting virgin fire

on Holy Saturday. The Mexicans had a most dramatic series of ceremonies towards the close of April, in which they commemorated the death of Tetzcatlipoca, their winter-sun god. The mourning of the maidens of Babylon over their slain Tammuz at that time is unknown to few; the figure of the young god was borne on a bier, his side pierced with an open wound.[1] The death of Mithra was dramatically and liturgically commemorated at the same period, the end of March, the ceremony including the burial in a rock-sepulchre of the dead saviour; so also the death of Attis in the worship of Cybele. It was not without reason, however wrongly interpreted, that the earlier Puritans shrank from holding service on Christmas and Good Friday.

Yet here again we find that superiority of the Roman festival, compared with the greater part of its predecessors, which should reconcile the believer to the thought of the parallelism. There were sober and earnest and wholesome features in some of these early celebrations, and these the Church has preserved. It has retained the ascetic preparation of the Teutons (a forty days' fast) and the Mexicans. It has retained the vivid sense of moral transgression which pervaded the Mithraic ritual. But there were crude features that religion should have suppressed ages before, and licentious riot that it should never have permitted to approach its liturgy; all these the Church has swept

[1] The Babylonian "Easter" was preceded by a long fast.

away and replaced by a liturgy that is at all events morally wholesome. For an example of the former features consider the spring-festival in ancient Mexico. About the beginning of April one of the finest of the war-prisoners at hand was chosen to represent the god. He was clothed in the resplendent robes of Tetzcatlipoca, and awarded eight pretty pages and four of the most charming maids of the community. He dined luxuriously, with the highest nobles of the land, and was in every way entertained as if he were the god he impersonated—for twenty days. On the last day of his reign his fair companions accompanied him on the royal canoe to the distant shore of the lake; and from the last kiss he turned with his pages towards the sinister temple beyond. The pages left him at the foot of the pyramid, and he mounted the solitary steps, playing the sacred flute. When he reached the summit he was seized by the Aztec priests, and flung on the deep-stained altar; and in a few moments his sated heart was quivering before heaven in the outstretched hand of the sacrificer. The worship of Cybele with all its curious resemblance to the Catholic liturgy, offers an appalling example of the other kind, or both kinds, of barbaric conceptions. St. Augustine describes with horror how he followed its services at Rome, where, nevertheless, the prefect had shorn them of their more repulsive features. The festival began on March 15th with a reed-bearing procession, com-

parable to the Catholic palm-procession. Five days afterwards a second solemn procession bore to the temple on the Palatine the sacred pine tree swathed in wool and crowned with violets and with the figure of a young man attached to it. The following day was "the day of blood," a day of fasting and lamentation, when the repulsive priests of the sect gashed themselves in the frenzy they induced by their drums and howls and wild dances; in the east they rent their garments in the public procession, and mutilated themselves, and bore the bloody emblem of Attis aloft. On the following day came the inevitable rebound of nature, the *hilaria*, a day of uncontrolled license in honour of the return or resurrection of Attis. Two days later the series concluded with the ceremony witnessed by Augustine, when the image of Cybele was taken from the Palatine to be washed at the junction of the Almo and the Tiber; the drums and howls making the streets of Rome echo, and the sexless priests in their feminine robes insane with excitement, as they went: and the whole city resounding with ribald songs and jokes and indescribable confusion as they returned in triumph.

Now let us turn to the Catholic observance of the death and resurrection of Christ. The liturgy begins with the celebration of Ash Wednesday, though to it must be referred the carnival services which are now held in the preceding fortnight. The carnival (*carnevale* = farewell to flesh), like the Lent which inspired

it, is a pre-Christian institution. It is one of the many illustrations of the tendency of ascetic laws to provoke a reaction. Not even in the periods of the Church's greatest power has it been able to suppress the license of the carnival. It can but pitifully institute a few expiatory services and make pathetic appeals to its faithful. The Ash Wednesday service formally opens the Lenten liturgy, and is, as all know, characterised by the marking of the foreheads of the people with a fine ash (obtained by burning the palms of the preceding Palm Sunday), the priest meantime repeating: "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto dust must thou return." The whole of the ritual is devised to enforce the same thought, yet it must be granted that it is more imposing in theory than in practice. Between the haste to mark so many hundred people and the Latin form of the words, the rite fails to impress in the majority of cases. However, the purple vestments and solemn chants and denuded altars are not without effect, and the sermon at the evening celebration—when the marking is repeated—usually presses the moral significance of the ceremony with fervour. The strict fast and abstinence that are enjoined (milk, butter, cheese, and eggs being prohibited as well as meat) help to stimulate the tardy imagination. I defer to the next chapter, however, the fasts and other ascetical elements of the Catholic system, and confine myself here to the liturgical

side of the calendar. Though the Sundays which follow until Easter are exempted from the Lenten law of fasting, the ritual sobriety of the Lent is fully maintained. Purple vestments are worn by the priests, the deacon and subdeacon either wearing purple chasubles, which are curiously pinned up, or dispensing with the silken robe altogether. Flowers and ornaments disappear from the altar, and the sober plain chant replaces the music of Gounod and Mozart in the choir. With the arrival of Passion Sunday the saints cease to smile on the worshippers, their statues and pictures retreating in sorrow behind veils of purple cloth. On the following Sunday occur the well-known blessing of palms and the procession in commemoration of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. Now the ritual supersedes the familiar rites with a great variety of dramatic ceremonies. A solemn procession, bearing palms, proceeds to the door of the church, where the celebrant and his ministers wait without, and are at length admitted amidst loud hosannas, and conducted to the altar. A feature of the service is the chanting by the deacon, with curious modulations, of the entire record of the passion of Christ from one of the Gospels (the other three gospel records being read or sung on the Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday); the priest intervenes in a low tone, and in a very low key, with the words ascribed to Christ, the sub-deacon chants in a high key all other single

utterances, and frequently a choir renders, with harmony and less simple modulation, the cries of the crowd. On the Wednesday this chant is repeated in the mass, but the ritualist proceedings of the Holy Week begin in earnest on the Wednesday evening with the impressive and curious "tenebræ" (darkness) service. This consists chiefly of the chanting of a great number of psalms (the matins and lauds from the breviary) and antiphons in ever-varying tones, and includes the singing of the "lamentations" of Jeremiah in a singularly touching and beautiful melody. Meantime, the gradual extinction of the lights on a great triangular candelabrum conveys a symbolic reminder of the abandonment of Christ. The last antiphon, a weird and moving composition, is chanted kneeling; amidst the increasing darkness the Miserere is slowly recited, and at its close, in complete darkness, the banging of books seeks to reproduce the commotion of nature which accompanied the death of Christ. The last act is certainly ultra-dramatic, and unfitted for our matter-of-fact congregations.

On the Thursday morning an elaborate ritual, into which I cannot enter here, commemorates the "Last Supper." It is a feast of the Eucharist, and for the hour or two the altar glitters with festive splendour on the background of the purple-mantled church. At the close the sacrament is solemnly borne, in a vessel swathed with white silk, to the "sepulchre," a

temporary altar in as retired a position as possible. Then the high altar is stripped of its last token of rejoicing, the sanctuary lamp is extinguished, and the doors of the tabernacle are flung open that all may see the abandonment. The ritual is sternly bent on impressing the faithful with a sense of the dire consequences of sin. In the afternoon the priest ceremoniously washes the feet of his assistants, in memory of the act ascribed to Christ. The day concludes, as before, with the "tenebræ."

On the following day liturgical art exhibits its most moving powers. No mass is celebrated. The latter part of the morning service is called "the mass of the pre-sanctified," but it is merely a partaking by the priest of the host which was consecrated on the preceding day. To describe the service in detail would be a lengthy task. It is the supreme concentration of the liturgical elements that seek to imprint a sense of sin in the earlier ceremonies. The black vestments, the complete silence of the organ and the bells, the solemn chant of the passion-story, the denuded altars, and the prominence of the crucifix and its abject veneration by the discalced ministers, do not indeed provoke any approach to the neurotic frenzy of the cult of Tammuz or Attis, but they have a most profound influence on the man who believes that Christ suffered for human sin. There is a sermon; but words are less potent than the emotional agency of that wonderful ritual. In the

afternoon an English service (the "way of the cross" or the "three hours' agony"—a collection of sermonettes, hymns, and prayer) is held, and at night the "tenebræ" service is repeated. The service on Holy Saturday is probably one of the most elaborate ritualist structures ever framed. Few worshippers assist at it during the whole three or four hours it lasts, and fewer still can appreciate one half of it. One must read it in the missal (or the special prayer-book which Catholics use in Holy Week). It commences with that creation of new fire of which I have spoken, passes to an elaborate blessing of the baptismal water and the paschal candle (over which the deacon sings a beautiful pæan of triumph which is in itself a history of the growth of religion), and labours, somewhat drearily, through a lengthy and lifeless series of collects and prayers. The litanies are chanted, and the altar is vested with its linen cloths, while the ministers lie quite prostrate, face downwards on the altar steps. This is the culmination of the passion-liturgy. At its close there seems to come the whisper of the resurrection. The ministers retire to the vestry, and come forth in brilliant vestments for a solemn mass. The ritual proceeds in a quiet festive tone for a few moments, and then, when the priest has intoned the "Gloria," it leaps at a bound into the loud triumph of the Resurrection. The organ peals forth with redoubled energy after its enforced silence, all the bells in the church are rung

with a deafening vigour for a few moments, and assistants run to and fro, lighting the lamps with the new-born fire, dragging away the purple veils that have hidden the smiles of the carven saints, and clothing the altars with their Easter glories. The rest of the day is spent in hearing confessions, for most of the faithful approach communion on Easter morning; though the obligation is distributed over a period of several weeks. The solemn Easter mass represents the spiritual rebound from the compression of soul of the week of lamentation. It is sung with the highest ritual splendour that the resources of the church permit, and usually closes with Handel's inspiriting "Hallelujah" chorus.

Here, manifestly, we witness an immeasurable advance in the celebration of the great festival of the spring. We can with some confidence penetrate far back into dim prehistoric ages, and see men impelled to an annual rejoicing as the advancing sun kisses the cold bosom of the earth, and she responds with her entrancing raiment of the early spring. Then myths and legends are framed—stories of gods to be conciliated with human sacrifices and disordered conduct. Even when Christianity appeared the old license still found shelter under its legend in many a religion, though others were equally zealous to purify the festival. Now we find Easter an ethical ceremony of dramatic force. Whatever we make of its intellectual aspect or of the historical allegation it

sets forth (or even the moral complexion of that doctrine), we cannot question that this is one of the most potent agencies in the whole ethical discipline of the Church of Rome. Were the series of services rendered entire (with omissions on Holy Saturday) in the English Church, and with the same ritual solemnity, their force would be beyond question.

Another festival of the spring, which frequently occurs during the Lent, is the modern service of the Quarant 'Ore. This has been instituted chiefly for the purpose of worship, but it proves an ethical institution of importance. The host is exposed to public veneration for forty hours, day and night, amidst a rare display of flowers and burning tapers. Imposing ceremonies inaugurate and terminate the "Exposition," and there are special sermons to ensure appreciation. Those who have spent an hour "watching" before the altar in sincere faith know the spiritual and ethical value of the ceremony. But a more generally known festival of the spring is the May festival of the Virgin. The month of May is dedicated to the honouring of Mary. In other words, the higher Catholic ideal has again ousted an old-world festival that had degenerated into a religious sanction of license. To the primitive mind it seemed that the good spirit that melted away the bonds of winter, and breathed the comforting warmth on the earth, and called forth the gladdening flowers, must also have kindled the generative fire that suddenly

ran through the veins. In time the ethical religions came with their ideas of law and duty, their gospel of the higher possibilities of life; yet these old nature-festivals proved in too many cases irresistible. Christianity itself by no means smote them to the ground with one wave of a magical wand. However, all that concerns us is that the Catholic Church has given to the world two great spiritual festivals of the spring—Easter and May—to which hardly a trace of the older license attaches. The pre-Lenten carnival continues, but when one reads of the mediæval carnival, with its corybantic priests and monks, one realises that the Church is gaining even here. At Easter and the May festival the sublimation is complete; Catholics do not seek entertainment on Good Friday, and we will hardly hold the Church accountable for our Bank Holiday.

The ethical value of the May festival is determined, as on all the other festivals of the Virgin, by the ideal which the Church urges in its worship of Mary. Most of the older religions worshipped a virgin-mother-goddess; and, although this had any but a spiritual force in earlier ages, it was passing into a high and austere ideal in many religions when Christianity arose. But whatever we may think of the past—whether the cult of Mary was introduced in the way of competition, whether its similarity to older cults occasioned a survival of the older license, whether the ideal of continence it brought was ill-

advised, and so on—the ideal of the Virgin exerts a fine influence in the present life of the Church of Rome. It is firstly and chiefly an ideal of chastity (not now necessarily of virginity), but it is much more than this. The Catholic imagination has brooded over the life of Mary until it has discovered in her the highest grade of every virtue—love, gratitude, devotion, humility, prudence, and all the rest. This is the ideal that we find presented in the cult of Mary; and one may truthfully say that the Church desires the impressing of this ideal as much as the rendering of honour to the Virgin in its promotion of the cult. Youths and maidens from fifteen to the age of marriage are especially enlisted in "the service of Mary"; that is manifestly with an ethical aim. Hence one need not be eager to quarrel with the numerous services which are dedicated to the Virgin. The aim of the ritual is, as I said, chiefly to stimulate the emotions (though at times also to set forth the ideal in symbolic show) with regard to an ideal that already dwells in the mind. At the May festival it is the image of Mary in its totality of virtue and privilege that is presented. Every Sunday evening, but especially on the first Sunday of the month, pretty processions of girls and maidens in white dresses wind about the church, singing hymns to Mary; and her statue is crowned with flowers. In the north of England these May processions are important events in the life of a congregation. I

believe I have myself figured in one of these long ago as a little cherub with star-spangled wings of muslin and filmy white tunic. On the other festivals of the Virgin it is one or other aspect of her virtue that is enforced. On the Purification, in February, the sermon and the liturgy tell of her obedience to law. On the Annunciation, in March, her privilege is presented as the reward of virtue. Then there are the feasts of the Visitation, the Nativity, the Name of Mary, the Holy Family, the Assumption, and the great feast of the Immaculate Conception.[1] On all these festivals one or other facet of a lofty ideal of womanhood is set forth, so that, whatever be the opinion of the theologian, the moralist must regard the cultus with satisfaction. At the same time I am constrained to add that, though I have lived amongst ignorant Catholics in England, Ireland, and Belgium, I have seen none of that "adoration" of the Virgin that offends the Protestant eye (or imagination). The Catholic catechism admits the term "worship," in respect of Mary and the saints and their relics

[1] It is remarkable how persistently people misunderstand the privilege of the Immaculate Conception. Dr. Haeckel, for instance, in his *Riddle of the Universe*, confounds it with "the miraculous impregnation" of Mary, with which it has nothing to do. The privilege means that, whereas all the children of Adam come into the world with the taint of hereditary sin, Mary was exempted from the law. The title refers to the conception *of* Mary by her mother, not to the conception *by* Mary of Christ; and therefore "comparative mythology" and "the laws of physiology" have nothing to say in the matter. Even Balzac speaks of it as "an article which alone is enough to make a physician an unbeliever"!

and images. The difficulty of defining causes great confusion here. But I think that no matter how powerful the Catholic peasant takes Mary to be, he never forgets that hers is a derived power and a power of persuasion. There is a corresponding difference in his worship, however intense it may become at times.

With the other chief festivals of the year I need not linger. Pentecost, or Whitsunday, has lost much of the solemnity which it had when it was the great baptismal day. It remains, however, a high spiritual ceremony, for it is the feast of the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier. When we recall the licentious Roman festival of the Floralia, with its sordid goddess and sordid legend and sordid dances of the *meretrices*, which it has succeeded, we learn to appreciate it the more. The following Sunday is the feast of the Trinity, a day of little enthusiasm. Corpus Christi, the feast of the Eucharist, occurs on the following Thursday, with the great processions I have described. The following Friday is dedicated to the Sacred Heart, a ceremony that seeks to impress more deeply the thought of Christ's love. In August occur the Assumption of Mary and a curious Franciscan festival, the Portiuncula, which I will explain later. October is a second "month of Mary" of recent institution. Its Sunday evenings are chiefly distinguished by the solemn recital of the rosary. In October also occurs the interesting feast of the

"Guardian Angels." An angel is enjoined to take charge of each of us throughout life, according to Catholic teaching, to inspire good thoughts and repel the tempter. Catholics often pray to, or converse with, these Socratic companions. There are traces of the belief in the Old Testament, pointing to the Persian religion. But it is curious to find that the Chinese children also celebrate an annual festival in honour of their guardian spirits. The Chinese child's bed becomes an altar on that morning on which it offers simple sacrifice to its good "lady-mother." On the 2nd of November, the feast of "All Souls," a solemn mass is sung in memory of all the dead (in Purgatory). This is mainly a doctrinal festival, but it is not without influence on the assistants. The Chinese have a similar festival, when they proceed in crowds to their cemeteries, just as the Catholics of Paris pour out to Père Lachaise. The Positivists have so far appreciated the beauty of the idea, in the sense of a commemoration, as to conclude their calendar with a similar ceremony. The feast of All Saints, which occurs on the preceding day, and is a very important festival in France, obtains little more than a formal recognition in England. I will return later to the ethical influence of the cult of the saints. In December we find the feast of the Immaculate Conception, and immediately afterwards the purple trappings and the announcement of the fast tell of Advent, the shadow and the expectation of Christmas.

On these greater festivals hangs the long and massive chain of the Roman calendar. Saint succeeds saint, and mystery follows mystery, on the stage of the sanctuary and in the dramatic play of the ritual elements. The danger of monotony, the psychological difficulty I at first alluded to, is met by a kaleidoscopic variation of the facets of the great ideal. When we have set aside, as not concerning us, the interest of worship which has so largely inspired the structure (though we must not forget that this is itself a spiritual interest), there remains a notable fund of ethical discipline in the stately procession of the calendar. It is manifest that the spiritual organisations of the future, which will seek, like the Positivist system, to rear a structure of ethical discipline on a non-theistic base, will find large inspiration, as Comte did, in the Roman experience.

CHAPTER VII

THE ASCETIC IDEAL

THE ascetic ideal of the Church of Rome is rejected with no less disdain than is its sensuous ritual by most of the other Christian Churches. To the Protestant mind the one is no less barbaric and perverse than the other. Yet the impartial moralist finds a singular difference in the position of these two distinctive features of the Roman ethical system. When the Catholic is pressed by his Evangelical critic to indicate the dogmatic bases of his ritual structure, he can but appeal to tradition, to the promise of a divine guidance for the Church. Regarded in the sole light of the New Testament, Christ was assuredly an anti-ritualist. But the positions are entirely reversed when there is question of the ascetic principle. The Catholic finds a warrant for his ascetical practices on nearly every page of the New Testament. The voice of Christ ever directs those who are fired with a spiritual ambition to leave all they have and turn the pleasant path of life into a cross-bearing pilgrimage. St. Paul insists no less

clearly and forcibly on the need for self-denial and mortification.

With this singular situation I am not directly concerned, but a glance at the scriptural groundwork of the ascetic discipline of the Church discovers a point of some interest. When we take all their utterances collectively we notice an entirely different motive in the ascetic gospels of Christ and St. Paul. Both motives are indeed present in each case; but the Gospels give prominence to one root of the Church's ascetic discipline, whilst the Epistles chiefly emphasise the other. Christ never speaks of the severe counsels of his faith without a consolatory reminder of the "hundredfold" in the life to come. St. Paul is a more practical moralist. He finds broad ground in this life for his claim that we must "crucify the flesh." Paul's immediate hearers knew well what he meant when he compared the course of man's life to the race in the circus. They lived in a world where little else was of interest or moment. They had spent their nights under the walls of the circus, and fought their way into it at daybreak, and followed the race with frenzied enthusiasm when the magistrate gave the signal. They knew the rigour and austerity with which the runner prepared for his contest; they felt the supreme importance of this training, or ἄσκησις, the first idea of "asceticism." And when St. Paul bade them conceive the course of life as a race, the more exacting in pro-

portion as immortal life was raised above a garland of perishable olive, a race in which few of those who ran would reach the goal, they set themselves to the training with the ardour of the athlete.

Both these motives are urged by the Catholic Church to-day in defence, or palliation, of the ascetic burdens it still imposes on the faithful. The sermons of Lent and Advent incessantly extol both the present virtue and the future reward of fasting and mortification. With the transcendental theory of these practices we have no concern here. It will suffice to indicate that it is one of the chief roots of the Catholic feeling for asceticism. But the ethical student must find many points of interest in the Roman ascetic discipline as it is related to the Pauline conception. For two thousand years the Church of Rome has used the ascetic principle in its moral discipline. Its final acceptance or application of that principle should be instructive. Moralists have urged the principle from time immemorial, and in almost every mental and religious environment—in India, Persia, Egypt, and Rome, amongst the Esquimaux in the chilly north, the Aztecs and the Teutons in the temperate zone, the natives of Australia and Africa in the broiling south. The long and varied experience of Rome may throw some light on the question. The Protestant often rejects the principle on the ground that it is "pagan." It is, assuredly; but so is prayer. Indeed, nothing

is more competent to make us approach the ascetic principle in a serious temper than the extraordinary unanimity with which it is recommended by the religions of the world.

In an earlier chapter I have referred to the rigorous character of the training for the priesthood in even many of the lower religions. Elie Reclus (*Primitive Folk*) describes the appalling austerity with which the young Esquimaux prepares for the dignity of the *angakok*. The Indian fakir, the Mongolian shaman, the Egyptian dervish, and other low sacerdotal types, are trained with equal rigour. Initiation into secret societies or certain social grades is also conducted with great austerity amongst many savage tribes. Wuttke describes the stringent training and testing of Indian youths before they are admitted to manly estate; Lubbock tells of the equally severe initiations of Australian natives into certain of their associations; and Réville finds similar practices amongst many of the African tribes, where secret select societies are so curiously abundant. In Mexico long fasts and other austerities were not confined to the clergy; even amongst the far from sombre Chinese the fast is often enjoined, apart from Buddhist influence. When we rise to the higher religions the ascetic principle does not lose any of its rigour, though its motive varies very largely. The asceticism of the Buddhists, the Persians, the later Hebrews, the Pythagoreans, and the Essenes is

familiar. The great religious revival of the early centuries of the Christian era strongly reasserted the ascetic principle. Not only Christians and Neo-Platonists, but the followers of Mani, Mithra, and Isis, preached great austerity of life to the spiritually ambitious.

The fast is, of course, the chief and the most familiar of the ascetic practices which the Church of Rome still enjoins on its faithful. It is, in fact, one of the oldest and most constant forms of self-denial in the history of religion. I have already given a large number of instances of the practice, and could adduce others from all parts of the world and all grades of religious development. But I will be content to indicate some of the many speculations which have contributed to this wide appreciation of the past. Réville, noticing the general practice of fasting amongst the indigenous races of America, conjectures that they regarded food as one of the chief vehicles by which evil spirits entered into the body. He observes that even so low a race as the Caribs thought that fasting made a man more agreeable to its gods. Tylor, who gives many details about the long fasts of the Red Indians, thinks that the practice may have been occasioned by experiences which are incidental to every hunter's life. The Indian would notice that after a long (involuntary) fast his mental powers were strangely altered. The feverish exaltation would be taken to mean the entrance into him

of a good spirit, and thus it would in time occur to him to adopt the fast as an effective means of securing the much-prized possession by a good spirit. An Indian chief once stated that the purpose of the fast was "to make the body free and light to receive dreams"; and dreams, sleeping or waking, are ever regarded as divine manifestations amongst the lower tribes. Hence even amongst Indian children the power to endure long fasts is "a most enviable distinction." Very similar is the idea of the Zulus, who fast much. They say "the continually stuffed body cannot see secret things." In the Malay Archipelago the fast is practised for the purpose of conversing with the spirits in dreams. The idea changes little when we pass to the barbaric religions. The Mexicans still regarded the state of mental exaltation and the hallucinations caused by their severe fasts as indications of a divine afflatus. There, however, the fast was chiefly looked upon merely as a means of pleasing the gods. Réville even suggests that they had some notion of a supernatural reward for their austerities. In China, where the ascetic idea proper did not appear until the rise of Buddhism and Taoism, there has always been a feeling that the fast makes a man more agreeable to the gods and ancestral spirits. A fast is enjoined upon the official or parent who is about to offer sacrifice, and when the usual procession has failed to bring rain in a time of drought (and the statue of the god implicated has

fruitlessly been exposed to the sun for some hours—as Catholics often treat their images), the mandarins frequently command general abstinence from flesh-meat for the purpose of appeasing the gods. In fact, the Chinaman is urged in some of his didactic works to prepare himself by fasting when he is about to visit a high official of the State.

A trace of the older idea still clings to the Brahmanic asceticism, where it is thought that a man can strip the devas of their supremacy, and force them into obedience to his will by violent and continuous penances, but as a rule the higher religions have the strictly ascetic idea of the fast which St. Paul expresses. In them, as in modern Catholicism, the fast is an implement of moral training, a means of enfeebling the "passions" or the "flesh." The old idea of the action of the fast on the mind has all but disappeared. The antithesis of body and soul has grown into a philosophic dogma, and St. Paul's conception of a war of the two elements of human nature has been entirely accepted. "The flesh hath its desires against the spirit." It must be enfeebled by the occasional withdrawal of nourishment, whilst the sacrifice will add a proportionate strength to the will.[1]

Yet it must be confessed that the practice of fasting has greatly degenerated even in the Church

[1] Compare also the fasts of the Mormons and the Salvation Army for the assistance of their philanthropic funds.

of Rome. In the earlier centuries, when the monks and hermits were content with one meal a day (at sunset), the fast meant a sacrifice of this one reluctant concession to the body's need. In the course of time it came to mean the taking of one meal in the day, and that of an exceptionally simple fare. In our own day, the fast of the Cistercian monk consists in the taking of one meal—an uninviting refection of bread and water—in the day throughout the period of the fast. But, whether it be the body or the spirit that has degenerated, the fast is now a much less formidable infliction. The "ecclesiastical fast" (as distinguished from the "natural," or absolute, fast that precedes communion) is now defined as the taking of *one full meal* in the day. This is generally taken at midday. Abstinence from flesh always accompanies the fast (though not *vice versâ*), but the man of strong physique is usually able to consume sufficient nourishment for a day at the meal. I have seen the Belgian friars, who observe the fast very regularly, take their midday meal of fish, vegetables, eggs, beer, cheese, butter, and rice-milk, and have felt little anxiety for their proper sustenance. But the casuist has deduced many conclusions from the phrase "one full meal" which help to smooth the asperity of the law. He allows the morning coffee; and, as physiologists have told him that mere liquid is hurtful, he sanctions the addition of a small piece of bread

(not more than two ounces). In the evening he grants a partial meal—eight ounces of solid nourishment, with drink *ad libitum*. In fact, "drink does not break the fast" is one of his firmest principles, so that the faster may consume as much beer, tea, coffee, or thin cocoa, as he likes—such liquids as wine and soup being, of course, disallowed apart from the meal.

Nevertheless the fast remains a severe infliction in spite of all these concessions. It has been said of Dugald Stuart that he could provide his system with sufficient nourishment by dining once in three days. In many countries our English breakfast is practically unknown, and the fast only pinches in the limitation of the evening meal. But there is now so general a custom of taking three or four meals a day that even the modified fast is a veritable mortification. That is, perhaps, what many would expect from the purpose of the fast, but here another principle of casuistry comes into play. *Lex positiva non obligat cum gravi incommodo*—a human law (or any law beside the natural moral law) does not bind when its observance involves a serious hardship. A violent headache is counted such an *incommodum*, and—*experto crede*—it is a normal consequence of the fast for many people. Thus in one way or other—through the changed conditions of life, the physical degeneration of many races, the decay of spiritual docility, etc.—this chief appli-

cation of the ascetic principle in the Roman discipline is growing more and more restricted. In theory the extent of the fast remains unchanged; all the faithful over twenty-one years of age must, unless there be serious reason in health or employment, fast throughout Lent (except on Sundays), on the Wednesdays and Fridays of Advent, the Ember Days, and the vigils of a few great festivals. In Catholic countries, even in Ireland, the law is more or less fulfilled.[1] In England few fast; even in monasteries and presbyteries only a small minority. I have heard an extremely religious and respected priest urge that the Catholic (priest or layman) of average health and occupation will do well if he fasts only on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. One needs exceptional robustness to observe the long Lenten fast and discharge a creditable service, secular or spiritual. The Ember Days are more frequently observed.[2] Isolated fast-days, such as the

[1] But in Spain a dispensation from the fast for the whole year may be bought for 7½*d*.

[2] The Ember Days are the Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays of certain weeks which are appointed in the different seasons. They occur before Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, and in September. It is probable that they represent an ancient preparation for these festivals in pre-Christian religions, and that the third week of September has been added for symmetry. The name has nothing to do with "ashes," but is either a corruption of the Latin title, "Quattuar tempora" (hence, clearly, the German "Quatember"), or is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *ymb rennen* = "to run about" (the year). But there are writers who think the fast has been enjoined on these days because the ordinations are held on them; others dispute the priority.

vigil of the Nativity, etc., are very generally observed in Catholic lands. There is no obligation (outside of certain religious orders) to fast on Fridays, but here and there a few are found who fast on that day in memory of the Passion; and there are even a few who fast on Saturdays in honour of the Virgin.

Before I give an appreciation of the custom it is advisable to explain the associated law of abstinence from flesh-meat. As I said, the fast always includes abstinence, but abstinence from flesh is frequently enjoined without fasting. This is the case on all the Fridays of the year, exclusive of a Friday on which Christmas-day may fall. In Lent and Advent, too, the law of abstinence remains, although the fast may be neglected. In certain countries, and on certain days in England (notably Ash Wednesday and Good Friday), the Church extends the proscription to eggs and *lacticinia*—milk, butter, and cheese. Yet here also we note a decay of ascetic observance. In Lent, for instance, the people are allowed meat at dinner on five days of the week. In many countries the Pope has in recent years entirely suspended—on the ground of the influenza epidemic, and so forth—the law of fasting and abstinence; many doubt if it will ever, or can ever, be reimposed. On Fridays the law imposes little hardship, though it would be a great mistake to deny it some element of mortification. People who have merely to consult their palate when they

choose fish cannot realise how very real a burden this law imposes on the average Catholic.[1]

The moralist will ask with some interest how far this chief application of the ascetic principle attains its object in the life of the modern Church of Rome. It will be granted readily, I think, that the law of fasting and abstinence must have a certain general spiritual effect in the Roman system. It is an imperious reminder of the claim of the religious ideal. No less than the enforced attendance at Mass on Sunday morning, the obligatory abstinence on Friday lifts even the sluggish mind for a moment from the groove of material life. In whatever spirit a man accept the law, it comes upon his life for the moment as a flash of light from another world. In that sense, and to a varying extent, according to spiritual temper, the observance, however mechanical or even reluctant, suggests anew the supremacy of the ideal. But I fear the moralist will find little evidence of the direct advantages which are claimed for this solitary vestige of the ascetic principle. The law of fasting and abstinence has been too generously relaxed by the anxious authorities to have any longer an appreciable influence on the sexual feelings ; such

[1] There are monastic orders in which flesh-meat is permanently excluded from the refectory. The Dominican Order is one of these, so that a certain popular picture, which represents Dominican friars dining on fish, and calls itself "Friday," entirely misses the point its title aims at.

as it is, the law is usually accepted with too little eagerness by the faithful to add any material strength to the will; and it is an experience as old and as broad as ascetic religion that a real abstinence is generally rendered futile by a woeful reaction. The moralist is hardly likely to quarrel with the casuist for his declaration that such laws do not bind when they cause "grave inconvenience" or hardship—that is, when they impair one's bodily or mental capacity. But this sensible change has destroyed the vigour of the old-time warnings to "crucify the flesh" and "take up one's cross"; and it frustrates the ascetic aim of the fast. Take the extreme case of those who observe the fast for forty days. If they are of the number of those who look to the letter of laws, they, as a rule, suffer no real withdrawal of nourishment. If they are such as enter into the spirit of the fast, they are, as a rule, men who would attain the end themselves by general sobriety of living. The customary Friday abstinence can, obviously, have no physiological effect; I have heard it urged from the pulpit (for it is much violated in places) on hygienic grounds. But, above all, there is the almost inevitable reaction. The Carnival seems to be as old as the Lent. The breakfast withheld is added to the dinner. The long festivities of Christmas and Easter, chiefly gastronomic, bring a glut that quickly ends the subjection of the

"flesh."[1] We may return to the point presently, when we have exhausted the Roman ascetical practices. Under the specific heading of fasting and abstinence we can recognise only the general spiritual advantage which I first indicated.

The law of fasting and abstinence is the only application of the ascetic principle which the Church imposes under pain of sin. And when one considers the notable attenuation of that law in our day, one will not expect to hear of much voluntary asceticism in the modern Church of Rome. The attitude of the average layman is, indeed, that the Church must direct him in such matters; he assumes it has enjoined on him whatever ascetical practice the ordinary Christian needs, and he rarely thinks of adding more. For instance, very few Catholics abstain—as many Anglicans do—from spirits, or alcohol generally, during Lent; a less conservative Church would probably have shifted the ban from flesh to alcohol.[2] Other little acts of self-denial are practised in seminaries and monasteries. It is, no doubt, a cultivation of will-force (though the chief object is to secure the heavenly "hundredfold") to dispense with sauces or condiments, or pass over a favourite dish, at table.

[1] So strong is the tendency to reaction that it may come about without any indulgence in food or drink. Mr. Havelock Ellis describes such an occurrence on an appalling scale—one that is constantly repeated—on page 291 of his *Man and Woman*.

[2] It is, however, true that Catholics very generally avoid the theatre and similar amusements during Lent.

In the lives of the saints more strenuous acts are recorded. It was a common practice of the saints to sprinkle their food with ashes; not infrequently they left it to rot before they would touch it. The famous *curé* of Ars, J. B. Vianney, attempted to live on grass. On many a saint the pious trick was played (as on St. Thomas of Aquin, I think) of substituting nauseous substances for his food, and they were eaten without recognition; so dead was the saintly palate to the savour of food. These things are "to be admired, not imitated," modern spiritual writers say. Even in the monastery they are not copied to-day. The ascetic find ample opportunity to deny themselves in declining luxuries. In the lay world there is little supererogatory asceticism.

The same must be said of the use of the scourge, or discipline. One reads blood-curdling stories in the lives of mediæval saints of the instruments employed for this purpose. So heavy were the whips in cases that unwary bystanders had arms and ribs broken by the loaded thongs. Often a feeble saint commanded some brother to administer the scourge to him; and when the brother's pity was greater than his piety, the saint would show him how to use it. One saint—a woman—had a vision vouchsafed to her of the scourges with which Christ was flagellated by Pilate, and she had similar ones made for her own use. They are depicted in her biography — laden

with heavy balls of lead and iron and terminating in vicious little claws or sickles. St. Jerome gashed his starved breast with pieces of rock in the desert.[1] These are the faded glories of hagiography. The monastic orders still enjoin the use of the discipline (the technical name for the scourge), but the implement generally used is not hurtful. In the Franciscan Order we were directed to use the scourge three times a week. After supper all retired to their cells, whilst the superior knelt before the crucifix in the corridor, and led the flagellation. But the cord partook of the humane spirit of our day, and refused to hurt; as it was applied over some thickness of clothing. As a rule, it is not the familiar girdle, but a lighter cord, that the monk uses for the purpose. Beyond the symbolism of the act, one saw little spiritual advantage in it. I have been told of blood-stained walls even in modern monasteries. Such violence is certainly rare. The modern discipline has assuredly no effect on the "flesh," as a rule, however it may touch the spirit. And amongst the laity, where there are no traditions to be supported, the discipline is rarely, if

[1] The moralist will find it interesting to contrast the spirit of Jerome with that of Augustine, his great contemporary. Whilst Jerome inflicted severe sufferings on himself at Bethlehem, Augustine sat at his neatly appointed table, with a sufficiency of plain food, a little wine, clean linen, and some silver. And whereas Jerome enjoyed the constant society of lady pupils, Augustine sternly excluded even his sister from his house.

ever, used. I have never heard of a case in modern times.[1]

Still more rarely do we meet in our day, even in the monasteries, the thousand and one ascetic appliances which were used in the Middle Ages. I have never seen, never met any monk who has seen, a hair shirt; yet the word occurs on every page of mediæval hagiography. Already in the fourth century we read of noble and delicate Roman ladies wearing such an affliction under their silken robes. Every mediæval monastery had an assortment of hair shirts —either, literally, close-fitting jackets of rough hide, or shirts which were plentifully besprinkled internally with wire or needle points. A special room in the monastery held a store of these, as well as scourges and other ascetic implements, and the superior dealt them out at discretion. One still meets at rare intervals in the monastic world certain of these contrivances. One I have seen was a broad wire band for the upper part of the thigh, studded with a hundred sharp points internally. This was in constant use in olden times, but the few existing specimens are rarely applied.[2] Other such bands

[1] Of the morbid use of the scourge through the Middle Ages, and amongst certain sects in modern Russia, I need not speak. But there is a curious and obscure fact which the moralist would do well to remember in this connection. Men of a certain type frequently procure scourging for directly sexual purposes.

[2] Which is a matter of congratulation. The purpose of such an appliance is obvious; but it is equally obvious to the physiologist that, by its action on the circulation, it must have largely defeated its own object.

encircled the innocent arm. Iron girdles were locked tight around the waist; sometimes saints carried them to their graves, so firmly were they lodged in the flesh. Some attached heavy chains to their waistbands. Others fastened in the scanty flesh of their atrophied breasts crosses and hearts of iron with corroding spikes. St. Francis of Assisi, who called his body "brother ass," but treated it with a violence which no ass ever feared from his gentle hand, flung himself into icy ponds and rolled in thorn bushes. There is a story of one mediæval saint who converted a frozen pond into a boiling lake. St. Peter of Alcantara, in building his monastery, made his own cell of such narrow proportions that—as in the famous Chinese cages—he could neither sit nor stand nor lie in it. The beds of the saints were made uncomfortable with the same pious ingenuity. Some discarded the bed altogether, and slept on the floor of their cells, with a block of stone or wood (sometimes a Bible) for a pillow. Others made beds of rough boards or the uneven trunks of trees, whilst others again added the luxury of broken crockery and glass to the hard couch.

The superior of a mediæval monastery found concern and occupation enough in controlling the penances of his subjects and thwarting the pious devices with which they ever sought to shorten their days. His successor of our day is almost entirely

relieved of such responsibility. Here and there, indeed, one meets a curious survival of the old spirit, lit, probably, in the mind of some simple, fervent monk by the reading of the heroic performances of the earlier monks. I remember a young lay-brother who was under my charge for a time, and who might have stepped from the frame of one of these mediæval pictures. Frail, ecstatic, and always smiling, he continually begged permission to imitate some of the more arduous penances described in the monastic literature. And I recollect very distinctly his intense joy when I once permitted him for a time to put some rough boards in his bed. Such types are very rare to-day. The more religious monks I have known were minded to seek merit in declining the luxuries that penetrate even into the monastery, and in constant and well-ordered spiritual work. Many of them recur to me who cannot have fallen short, either in belief or good purpose, of thousands of these heavy-laden monks of the past. Outside the monasteries these extraordinary practices and contrivances are no longer found in any degree. One reads very many instances of their employment by lay men and women in earlier Christian literature, notably in the fourth century and in many periods of mediæval life. St. Jerome's school on the Aventine furnishes more than one example. In those days, and in southern climates generally, the bath was a familiar luxury, and Christian leaders suggested its

sacrifice as a means of mortification. St. Jerome urged this with characteristic vehemence. It is said of one of his noble pupils that she bribed the slaves who accompanied her to the bath-room to conceal her pious fraud from her husband. It is recorded as a distinction of St. James that he never took a bath in his life, and never wore linen. An Italian saint of the eighteenth century is praised for an even more advanced practice of the same virtue. The bath is, in fact, still generally excluded from the economy of the monastery, though I have never heard the laity advised to shun it. In this case, however, it is not merely a question of asceticism.

Finally, asceticism is no longer urged or practised amongst the laity in the matter of sexual life to anything like the extent it once was. I have already spoken of clerical celibacy. There have been periods in the history of the Church when the vow of continence was more frequently taken or observed in the world than in the monasteries and presbyteries (for several centuries there was no law of priestly celibacy). With the enforcement of celibacy on the clergy it naturally followed that those who desired to make the vow assumed the priesthood or the conventual life. But throughout the Middle Ages people in the world frequently made the vow. It is recorded of one saintly royal pair (in Poland) that they lay abed with a drawn sword between them. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries hundreds of thousands

of married people foreswore their privilege, though the majority of these parted and entered monasteries. There are even to-day cases of this taking of a vow of continence by lay men and women, both married and single, but they are extremely rare. The practice is no longer extolled by the preacher, and even the confessor is advised to admit it with great caution. However, in this we must recognise more than a mere decay of the ascetic spirit. Asceticism in this respect was so strongly urged by Christian leaders because a peculiar quality was discovered in sexual union which had all the repulsiveness of sin without its definite culpability. Marriage legitimised the act—very much as ante-natal marriage will "legitimise" irregular offspring. St. Jerome and St. Augustine, who are chiefly responsible for the tradition of the Western Church in the matter, held strong, and in some aspects, very peculiar views. Thus the pleasure of love came to present an entirely different character from the pleasure of wine or of food, and the sacrifice of it was a matter of peculiar congratulation. Probably it is the decay of this unfortunate theory,[1] no less than a decay of ascetic fervour, that accounts for the comparative absence of voluntary continence amongst the Catholic laity of modern times. The spiritual romance has departed from the state of the

[1] The theory had a very definite ground in St. Augustine, who held that "concupiscence" was not an essential part of human nature in the abstract, but a quite accidental affliction on account of the original sin.

virgin—unless she lives in the picturesque surrounding of the nunnery. Certainly the Catholic community at large has not diminished its admiration of the maidens who continue to sacrifice for Christ's sake the fairest gift that earth can offer them. But there is, none the less, a notable decay of the older feeling; and it is doubtful if even the convents would be so well filled as they are were it not for the ceaseless canvassing and the lowering of the age of admission.

In conclusion, then, it would seem that we have not in the ascetic ideal an abiding element of the Roman ethical discipline. Slowly, but very certainly, the ascetic spirit is departing. Such laws as that which enjoins abstinence on Fridays and on a few occasional days will doubtless long survive. But they have already lost all appreciable usefulness from the formal ascetic point of view. They are too little onerous to depress "the flesh"; too much a matter of routine, or even something very like reluctance, to exalt the spirit. We may see in them, as I said, an ingenious and effective reminder of the supremacy of the religious ideal. They will continue, but not as properly ascetic practices. In the monasteries the ascetic ideal is bound to linger much longer. Hitherto it has been of the very essence of the monastic life. Augustine, it is true, endeavoured to moderate the rigour of the monastic life when he introduced it in the West, but the Eastern examples soon prevailed

over his philosophic sobriety. Yet for some centuries the Church has exhibited forms in which the cenobitic life may survive without asceticism. Such are the Society of Jesus, the Oratorians, the Oblates, and various other congregations. It is idle to ignore the fact that the ascetic spirit is decaying in the historic orders of St. Benedict, St. Dominic, and St. Francis. A few strenuous monks still uphold the austere traditions of the Trappists and Cistercians; but in what one may term the "middle" orders one finds, as a rule, a poor compromise with rules that they are naturally loth to modify in word. The better monks one meets to-day—they who are at once intelligent and spiritual—respectfully ignore the violent old traditions; they plead rather for plain living and high thinking or strenuous working. Even in the general literature of the modern monastic world one notices the change. The old achievements are still spoken of, but they "are to be admired, not imitated." They were done by men with "special graces" and "inspirations." Stress is laid on the superiority of spiritual self-denial—control of the temper and tongue, humility, endurance of undeserved censures, patience in sickness, the practice of little denials in food (salt, for instance), that strengthen the will without weakening the "flesh," and so forth.

In this particular the long and deeply interesting experience of the Church of Rome is fairly conclusive. Its apparent faithfulness to the words in which the

founders of Christianity urged the ascetic ideal that so vividly occupied the religious consciousness in their day dissolves on close examination. It is quietly discarding the ascetic principle in favour of more spiritual implements and devices. In the excessive dualism of the older theory of human nature it was possible to suppose one could greatly reduce the vitality of the body without prejudice, and even with positive gain, to the mind. Now we know that, if high living leads to plain thinking and vicious habits, a defective sustenance leads to other, though less repulsive, disorders. A nice equilibrium of our powers is a better base for moral life and happiness than a state of unnatural repression. The smile on the face of nature is not the smile of the temptress. Even the hermits of old thought it would be a braver thing to walk with unswerving step amongst the flowers of earth than to shun them ; but they believed it was a supra-human task. We have tried it, and we know better. Or we prefer the ruddy glow of health, with all its freckles, to the lily whiteness of the cloistered nun.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NORMAL MORAL LIFE

WITH the examination of the ascetic principle we complete our study of the separate elements of the Roman ethical discipline. Hitherto our procedure has been chiefly analytic. It remains for us to take a more synthetic view of the structure of moral discipline which the Church of Rome has built up. We must see how the symbolism of the sacraments, the captivating graces of ritual, the devices of the calendar, and the rigour of the ascetic principle are intermingled in the life of the Church.

And the first feature that arrests the mind when we approach the Roman discipline in its entirety is the orderly graduation of its ethical message. Such a graduation of ethical feeling is found, in fact, in every religion with a pronounced strain of moral teaching. But only in the Church of Rome do we find a complete scheme of ethical discipline designed by the pastorate for the recognition of this scale. Buddhism, for instance, offers a scheme of ten commandments to its followers, and these are graduated

to meet the spiritual ambition of its faithful. The man or woman of ordinary devotion is commanded to abstain from destroying life, from stealing, from unchastity, from lying, deceiving, and bearing false witness, and from the use of intoxicating drink. So shall he walk without violating the first requirements of the ideal, though he has not the heroism to quit the delectable plains of life. The next three commandments are laid on the layman of higher aspiration. He must prove his deeper fervour by abstaining from eating at unseasonable hours, from dancing, singing light songs, and all manner of dissipation, and from wearing any kind of ornament or using scents and perfumes. There remain yet two commandments of the Buddhist decalogue, and these apply only to the select spiritual orders of the great Asiatic faith. The priest or friar is commanded further to sleep on a hard and low couch and to live in a condition of voluntary poverty. Here we have an admirable graduation of religious ardour—if we take the more ascetic of these precepts as indications of spiritual purpose rather than external acts—and we should find in the Buddhist life an elaborate practical discipline corresponding to the scheme. Yet the Catholic religion gives a finer expression to the same feeling.

We may distinguish three great categories in the spiritual life of the Church. There is, firstly, the broad class of the 250,000,000 men and women who

make up the body of the Church, the ordinary laity who, in their own light phrase, will be content if they just pass the janitors of Paradise. On these is laid only the elementary law of the Hebraic decalogue, ingeniously interpreted and enlarged so as to include some measure of the positive virtues of a later ethical spirit. The second class consists of the religious orders and congregations, and, to an extent, the clergy. It is said in the Gospel that when an ambitious youth asked Christ for a rule of the higher life, he was told to sell all he had and give the proceeds to the poor. The counsel of chastity was quickly raised to a like elevation; and the first experiments in the cenobitic life revealed the importance of a rigid surrender of the personal will. Thus was formed the standard of the higher life—a life of voluntary poverty, lifelong celibacy, and strict obedience. But the Church of Rome never calls these "commandments." They are "the Gospel counsels," the expression of a higher will that an omnipotent deity is content to plead wistfully with the elect. And high above all towers the ideal of the saint, the hero of the religious world. This ideal does not necessarily include an observance of "the Gospel counsels"; the layman may reach the highest grade of sanctity in his home or in the crowded mart as surely as, though less easily than, the cloistered monk. Nor does it imply any degree of mystic or ceremonial knowledge. St. Bonaventure one day

assured a simple brother of his order that the shrunken old dame who sold fruit at the corner of the street had as much chance to gain the aureole of sanctity as he, the great theologian and cardinal. The Catholic roll of the canonised is a democratic document.

In the present chapter and the following we will examine the discipline by which the Church sustains the moral life of its laity, the unnumbered plebeians of the spiritual world. And here a distinction at once appears between the normal or continuous discipline of the moral life and the intermittent spiritual forces by means of which the Church counteracts the fatal tendency to monotony. An organised cult ever tends to become a mechanical observance; the Church does not need to be reminded of that. It meets the danger by a remarkable class of occasional influences, which we may take together under the title of "revival exercises" in the next chapter.

The three foremost agencies in the normal moral discipline of the Church of Rome are the priest, the church, and the Sunday. Those are elements which chiefly operate in all the Christian Churches and so many other religions, but there are, of course, many distinctive features of their action in the Roman practice. That the consecration of one day in the week to religious service is a continuation of the Judaic practice hardly requires mention; nor need

we stop to examine either the earlier evolution of the Sabbath or the forces which compelled Roman Christianity to transfer the consecration from the seventh to the first day. One finds it naïvely stated in Catholic devotional works sometimes that the first day was selected because so many of the great Christian events (Resurrection, Pentecost, etc.) took place on that day. Few others are ignorant that the Church found the first day of the week so widely distinguished by a special honour "as the day of the sun" that it was compelled to adopt it as its Sabbath.[1] The change was, on the whole, a gain in idealist force, as a matter of sentiment. Not the last and most weary day of the week was to be spared for religion—granted reluctantly to the spirit because the flesh was too tired to resist—but the first and freshest hours of the week were to be devoted to the higher life. The utilitarian inspiration of the older festival still lingers, it is true. Whilst preaching the sanctity of toil, the Church forbids even the threading of a needle or hammering of a nail on Sunday. This it enjoins (under mortal sin) no less stringently than the attendance at Mass. The "continental Sunday," in so far as it means an unnecessary transaction of business and shopping, is as much opposed to the spirit of the Church as it is repugnant to the British

[1] It is said that the Mexican is still seen sometimes to throw a kiss to the sun, the god of his fathers, as he goes to Mass on a Sunday morning.

conscience. On the other hand, however, the Church of Rome differs entirely from the Protestant Churches in placing no restriction whatever on Sunday play. It finds nothing dissonant from the sanctity of the day or the salutary precept of rest in a run or a game. Once the Catholic has attended the morning Mass (either the short "low" Mass or the sung Mass), he may spend the day as he pleases (without working); though the Church, as we shall see, invites him to a voluntary attendance at the afternoon or evening service.

With the priest as an ethical agency I have dealt already, and we may pass on to consider the church as the centre of the normal moral discipline. Max Müller, little as he accepted ecclesiastical claims, has a pretty lament somewhere that the church has ceased to be the heart of the community. The time was when, especially in the villages, the church proudly occupied the most important site in the area it served, and girt itself luxuriously with a broad greensward, and reared its tower or spire in watchful altitude over the homes of its children. We have changed much of that. Our churches slink away into quiet and cheap thoroughfares, and you can look down on their roofs from the neighbouring houses. It is a strange story, the history of the temple, as we can trace it, for instance, in the Mexican religion or in China, or even the Old Testament. The altar preceded the temple, a simple pile of turf or stones

on which the priest offered sacrifice amidst a circle of worshippers. Then, in Mexico, the altar came to be elevated on a huge pyramid of earth and stone, encircled by a serpentine stair, up which the great processions climbed. In time the images of the gods were added, and little shrines built to shelter them. And the shrines grew until they took in altar and priests and worshippers. With the ethical religions came the pulpit and the gradual shrinkage of the sacrificial altar; and we can trace the development onward, through the Wesleyan and the Unitarian chapel, to the altarless meeting-house of the Quakers or the Ethical Society.[1]

The Catholic Church is distinguished by that peculiar blend of conservative feeling and adaptation to the modern spirit which we are accustomed to expect. It is still pre-eminently "the house of the

[1] The Mexicans had begun to construct temples of the type familiar to us, without pyramids, before the arrival of Cortes. Such were their temples of the god of mind; the cross that gleamed from the summit of these probably denoted the four quarters whence the wind blew. On the other hand, pyramid temples are found amongst the Brahmanic ruins in the Malay Archipelago and elsewhere. In China the worship of the great elemental powers evolved distinct national temples, but there is a characteristic development of domestic chapels for ancestor worship. There is a *miao*, or oratory for the cult of ancestors, in every house. Here the family assembles on certain dates, and the father offers incense and tea and costly silks to the ancestral shades. The son dons the *bonnet viril* here, his *fiancée* is presented to his ancestors, and the marriage is celebrated; and the family gathers also on occasions of special fortune or hazardous enterprise.

Lord,"[1] yet it is emphatically an "ethical institute." The lamp that burns in the sanctuary tells of the bodily presence of the Deity, while the pulpit and the confessional proclaim the human service. Every line that the eye can follow in its structure converges on the altar, and every line of the altar radiates from the tabernacle, in which the host is preserved; yet the ceremonial duty of the worshipper is little emphasised, as I said, whilst an ethical strain runs through every ceremony. The theosophic element was never more sensibly felt than it is to-day. The Christian *basilica* of the fourth century was not a decorous meeting-house. St. Jerome says it came close to the doctor's shop as a place of gossip at Rome; the sermons of all the great preachers reflect the presence of an unrestrained and often turbulent audience. In the Middle Ages church-life was little more dignified. With the full elaboration of the dogma of the Real Presence the church has acquired a dignity and impressiveness that largely augment its spiritual action—whatever we make of the change intellectually or politically. The Catholic bends his knee to the sacrament in the tabernacle as soon as he enters, and even lifts his hat as he hurries past the street door.

I have already explained that the Church forces

[1] But the popular derivation of "church" from ἡ κυριακη [δικος] or το κυριακον is not uncontested. A few would derive it from the Latin *curia*, and others would trace it to the Gaelic *cyrch*.

its followers to drink the atmosphere of this sacred edifice for at least half an hour each week. Any religious or ethical body could make a weekly attendance of this kind a condition of membership, but the law of the Church is of a different order. The Church claims a delegated divine authority, and it has imposed this obligation under pain of mortal sin; that is to say, it has virtually raised it to the status of a grave moral precept. Moralists will differ as to the ethical value of such enforced attendance. One result of it is assuredly to bring many to the church in a grudging and reluctant spirit, so that they are unfit to receive its influence; though even here we can point to an analogous disadvantage—the action of social pressure or social interests—in bodies which do not enforce attendance. Yet in all but the lowest spiritual types it cannot be without advantage to follow an idealist ceremony, even with indifferent attention, once a week.

And the Church endeavours to use the occasion as far as possible for preaching a living message to the people. Where the Church has imposed a law under pain of grave disobedience, it dare not make that law so onerous as to court rebellion. One of the firmest principles of casuistry is that it must not multiply transgressions. Yet the short, earlier mass, to which the majority of the people go, is very generally interrupted for the purpose of giving a five or ten minutes' sermonette on some point of ethics

or belief. The Church, through the bishops, presses its clergy to do all that is possible in this way without laying an excessive strain on weaker wills and less well-disposed spirits. At the sung or "high" Mass there is always a sermon, as I have previously explained. A chapter or two of the New Testament are read from the pulpit, and the preacher usually takes a text from these, or comments on the whole passage, for from twenty to thirty minutes. This is usually a quiet pastoral or scriptural sermon, though on the greater festivals, when the finer music has attracted considerable congregations, the sermon gains proportionately in force and importance. The "epistle and gospel" for each Sunday in the year—that is to say, the section of an epistle and a gospel to be read on that day in the Mass—will be found in the Catholic prayer-book. Every priestly library includes volumes of sermons, or skeletons of sermons, on these epistles and gospels, and from these the discourse is usually taken.

This attendance at Mass in the morning completes the obligatory service of the Catholic on Sundays. It is, perhaps, some answer to the charge of demoralising a people by enforcing attendance that a very large proportion of Catholics assist at the voluntary evening service. In fact, many of those who attend the sung Mass in the morning have already assisted at an earlier "low" Mass, probably for the purpose of communicating. In the evening the Catholic Church

usually has a much larger congregation than at the High Mass. I have described the service, the chief part of which is the sermon. After the confessional, at all events, this is the priest's greatest ethical opportunity. But I need add little to what I have said about it. Ethic and dogma supply the subject with about equal frequency, and the discourse usually lasts about half an hour. Catholic priests very rarely read their sermons; but the younger clergy generally write them out and learn them by heart. The ethical action of the sermon varies indefinitely with the gifts or character of the preacher, as is the case in all other organisations. We have seen that the sermon is preceded by Vespers or Compline, or the Rosary (in the months of May and October, which are devoted to the special cult of Mary), and followed by the rich ritual of the Benediction.

Thus, when we seek the characteristic features of the Roman Church's employment of the Sunday for spiritual purposes, we find that the chief of these is its enforcement of attendance at one service as a test of membership.[1] It compels every member over the age of seven to come under its influence once in the week. Even in the case of the least spiritual this

[1] In this sense. Attendance at Mass being exacted under pain of mortal sin, the Catholic who neglects, without grave excuse in illness or other necessity, puts himself outside the "soul" of the Church; and those who remain long outside the "soul" of the Church practically place themselves outside its "body" (formal membership) also.

means that there is from time to time at least a dim and blurred and perhaps unwilling perception of an ideal. It would be a bold thing to say that this is no advantage; or that it is outweighed by the standing danger of the attendance becoming merely perfunctory and mechanical in an even larger class. When we take the Sunday service as a whole, including the ceremonies at which attendance is voluntary, we find that the characteristic Roman feature is, as one would expect, the use of liturgy and ritual. The ideal that is verbally presented by the preacher is strengthened and fertilised by the emotional agencies of the liturgy. The beautiful music—whether of the obscure artists who have built up the plain chant service of the altar or of the great composers who have devoted their highest gifts to the production of masses and Latin hymns—the dramatic action of the celebrants, the scenic grandeur, and the subtle influences of light and perfume, aim at the creation of emotions which may prolong and deepen the life of the mental image. The art of the orator is supplemented in the Roman discipline by a number of subsidiary arts and emotional agencies. It is sought to create an impression that will bear feeble and precarious witness to the higher world during the six days of distraction and dissipation that are to follow.

But the Church of Rome is too experienced a spiritual agency to be content with a quickening of

the ideal once in seven days. It dare not, indeed, make further use of its fateful power to command; he who multiplies laws, multiplies transgressions. Yet no spiritual power can complacently regard its exclusion from six-sevenths of the life of the people; and not the least interesting part of the Roman ethical discipline is its machinery for breaking in on the secular days of its people with a reminder of the supremacy of the spirit. Most of the institutions it has devised for this purpose fall under the head of "revival exercises," but we may take here a few that are more properly a part of its normal life. The chief of these are two devices for drawing the people to habitual attendance at church on certain week-nights. There is, indeed, a mass, or several masses, every morning, but the congregations are so slender that one cannot recognise here an agency of large effectiveness. The characteristic devices by which the people are brought to church during the week are, firstly, the founding or sanction of special cults, and, secondly, the formation of spiritual guilds or societies or confraternities.

By a special cult I mean the concentration of religious devotion on some particular mystery or phase of the divine life or some particular saint. A glance into Catholic devotional literature or at the interior of a Catholic church will discover a score of such devotions. There is the cult of the Sacred Heart, a form of devotion in which the love of Christ for men

is symbolically honoured:[1] the cult of the Sacred Heart of Mary, the Immaculate Conception, and other special privileges of the Virgin: the cult of the Holy Family: the cult of the Holy Face, and of the wounds of Christ: the cult of the Passion of Christ (illustrated by the *pietà*, or crucifixion-group, and the "stations of the cross," in Catholic churches): the cult of Mary, of St. Peter (as illustrated in the model of the famous Roman statue which is now found in most Catholic churches), St. Joseph, and a large number of other saints, to whom altars or statues or pictures are erected. As a matter of history, most of these special cults have been forced on the Church by the importunity of inventive devotees. In actual life they prove an effective means of bringing the people to church on week-days. Thus, in churches with which I am familiar, fairly large congregations would assist at Mass on Tuesday morning because it was followed by Benediction in honour of the charming Franciscan saint, Antony of Padua. On Thursdays numbers would assemble for Benediction in honour of the Virgin. On Friday the people would come for "the Way of the Cross," a form of devotion in which priest and people make the round of the series of pictures on the walls, illustrating the sufferings of Christ, and

[1] One reads in S. Titcomb's *Solar Myths* that the Brahmanists have a similar devotion, but I know no other authority for this. The cult is not a couple of centuries old in the Church of Rome.

read reflections on them and prayers to the Saviour (which will be found in the prayer-book). And every evening a sturdy few would gather for the public recital of the Rosary.[1]

The guilds or confraternities are a more potent spiritual agency. We have seen that these are semi-social, semi-religious fellowships, into which the Church attracts the faithful from early years. No sooner do the children come to an age of discretion, and make their first communion, than they are initiated into a Confraternity of St. Antony (with the Franciscans), or of St. Stanislaus (with the Jesuits), or some similar body with a patron-saint who may appeal to children. At sixteen they pass into the "Children of Mary" Society. Later they are urged to join the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart, of the Holy Family (for married folk), of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, or some similar fellowship. All of these have the spiritual side more pronounced than their social side. One of the clergy acts as director, the monthly meetings are held in the church and usually comprise a sermon and Benediction, monthly confession and communion are invariably exacted, and good conduct is sternly required. The more human emotions are enlisted by occasional social and convivial meetings in the

[1] The reader will find a great variety of these week-day services in the *Catholic Directory*, which is published annually. Under the head of each parish in England, it gives a list of its Sunday and week-day services.

school, or excursions, and by the granting of gay ribbons and sashes and special places and banners in the processions which wind round the church on the great festivals. Above these, again, are a small group of fellowships which form a quaint connecting link between "the world" and the cloister. The Third Order of St. Francis is, perhaps, the best known of these. St. Francis was asked by devout laymen to give a rule of life to men and women who were unable or unwilling to enter his First (for men) or Second (for women) Order. He therefore framed a Third Order for men and women who chose to remain in the world, yet would do more for their souls than the ordinary laity. These members of the Third Order have costumes like those of the familiar friar and nun, which they don at their meetings and in festive processions, and in which they are buried. A little fasting, many additional prayers, and religious meetings make up their distinctive practices. The Little Oratory of St. Philip is an analogous body, which is well known to visitors to the Oratorian church. Other monastic orders have similar fraternities through which they impart a measure of their sterner spirit to the people. Most of the members of a Catholic congregation are absorbed in one or other of these confraternities, and, as their religious meetings are always held apart from the normal services, they come more frequently under the influence of the Church.

But, however successful a Church may be in attracting people to its altars and pulpits, its work cannot end there. Its ministers must go out amongst the people, and keep the religious sense alert in them throughout the week. That is a common experience of all idealist bodies, and it imposes a problem of no little delicacy and difficulty. The moralist will look eagerly for the conclusions which the Church of Rome has drawn from its unique experience in this regard.[1]

A stringent application of the parochial idea is the first feature of the Roman discipline that invites attention in this respect. The idea is, of course, neither exclusively nor originally Romanist. The ancient Mexican religion well understood the value of parochial organisation. Each city was carefully distributed into parochial areas for the purpose of effective clerical supervision, and the priests went out continually from their austere presbyteries to minister

[1] A word must be said about the practice of praying morning and evening. The Catholic is under no obligation to do this, though the laity usually imagine, by force of an ineradicable tradition, that they sin in omitting the morning or evening prayer. In any case it is usual to kneel by the bedside first thing in the morning and last thing at night and say a few prayers. These are, as a rule, the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, Creed, Confiteor, and an Act of Contrition. The Church urges the inclusion of a daily examination of conscience. With a large number of the faithful this is an important element of ethical discipline; with the more flippant majority it is at least a reminder of the religious ideal.

amongst the people.[1] The parochial constitution needs little comment, but a word may be said of the way in which the Roman parish priest controls his district. The practice varies considerably with the general situation of the district or the predominant religion of the country, but the Church inspires certain broad lines of action, and so secures a good measure of uniformity. The extent to which the Church presses the parochial limit may be gathered from the circumstance that it forces the faithful to make their annual communion (though not the antecedent confession) in their own parish. The priest usually keeps a register of his parishioners, as I have said, and must maintain a close personal interest in every man, woman, and child under his jurisdiction. He should visit every house at least once in three months, and make himself acquainted with the spiritual condition of every member of the family. His church must, indeed, be the heart of his parish, but he must see that it sends its life-giving influence through every artery and vein of his little commonwealth. He is responsible before God for the moral condition of each member of his flock: that is the

[1] To show what surprising analogies one finds between disparate religions, I may note that the Mexican clergy gave the time of day to their people by the blowing of horns, a practice that is singularly paralleled by the public service of the sun-dial or the clock of the Christian church. Compare also the old Roman temple, in which the public standards of weights and measures were preserved, and the many secular uses of the Chinese temple.

first and last mandate of the Church to the priest. But I sufficiently described the action of the priest in the parish in the second chapter, and may pass to less familiar ground. Nor is there much to be said about the action of the priest in the school. The well-known eagerness of the Church to maintain its own schools and to exclude its children from the Board Schools is a clear proof that the Catholic school is a religious agency. The feeling is chiefly inspired by a regard for strictly sectarian interests which cannot concern us here, but it is not wholly due to such considerations. The Church regards the moral instruction given in the Board Schools as superficial and unsubstantial, as compared with its own more virile and firmly drawn morality. Moreover, it can never acquiesce willingly in the notion that religion is a matter to be confined within the limits of a fixed hour. It must pervade and colour the whole education of the child. The school must be embellished with crucifixes and holy images; the teacher must have been trained in its own semi-ecclesiastical colleges; the historical and scientific instruction must be imparted discreetly; and the priest must have free access to the children at so favourable a moment. The school is an important agency in the Catholic life.

There are, however, one or two distinctive features of the Catholic system which are less understood. In such countries as England, in fact, they are very generally neglected, but in Catholic countries they

form an important element in the normal life of the Church. Take, for instance, the carrying of the sacrament to the sick. No one who has witnessed the spectacle in a Catholic country can question its idealist agency. Through the noisy streets of the village and along the quiet lanes one sees the surpliced priest bearing the sacred pyx, preceded by an acolythe with bell and candle; and men drop their hoes and picks, and women and children run to the doors to honour on their knees the consoler of the dying. Then there is the Angelus, perhaps one of the most wonderful practices that the Church has introduced amongst its people. Three times a day, at six, twelve, and six, the bell rings out its triple summons; and the laughter and the noise of toil die out over the fields, whilst all recollect themselves (in the devotional phrase) for the triple salutation of the Virgin. Like the prayer of the Mohammedan, it is a remarkable assertion of the supremacy of the spirit and the subjection of all earthly life.

These practices are necessarily abandoned in non-Catholic countries, and are fast disappearing from urban life everywhere. In England the priest hurries to the sick-bed without any external mark of the august burden he carries; and the Angelus is entirely omitted, or at the most furtively and imperceptibly whispered. But there is one doctrine of the Church of Rome which presents itself in this connection. The early Church borrowed from the Semitic nations

the idea that each human being is accompanied throughout life by a guardian spirit. One finds a similar idea in China, but there it has a child-like and unpractical complexion. The little Chinese child is taught to fancy that an invisible "lady-mother" follows all its actions; and on the feast of these guardian spirits the child has an altar spread with infantine gifts on its bed in the early morning. The belief is more seriously urged by the Church of Rome. Its feast of the Guardian Angels is not a children's festival. Frequently in sermons and instructions and in the confessional the Catholic is reminded that an angel is always at his side, to protect and to rebuke. One sometimes meets the belief amongst Catholics of the older school that this angel remains in sorrow at the door of a theatre or other dangerous place that may be entered. Many of the saints are said to have been granted a bodily acquaintance with their guardian spirits, and to have conversed with them daily. The Catholic instinctively consults them in perplexity; I have known Catholics to pray that their guardian angels would awaken them on necessary occasion at some unusual hour in the morning. The belief is ceasing to command respect to any practical extent amongst modern Catholics, but, such as it still is, it is a notable illustration of the Church's eagerness to pursue the faithful out into the busiest paths of life and the innermost recesses of their homes.

A sketch of the normal moral discipline of the Church of Rome would be very incomplete without some notice of the Catholic devotional literature, or rather of the means of disseminating it. Within the limits of this work it would be impossible to give even a general survey of that literature in itself. It falls into a number of broad divisions, and an entire chapter would not suffice to enumerate the chief works in each division. Perhaps the most familiar and most prominent class is that of hagiography. Catholic lives of the saints are little read outside the body that produces them, and I do not think it is unfair to say they have only a limited circulation amongst the cultured members of the Church, lay or clerical. They are not only wholly devoid of critical pretence as regards the anecdotes and legends they contain, but they run on psychological lines that are infinitely more remote from life than an Adelphi melodrama. The English Jesuits are setting a better example, though the type is still sadly unnatural. Rome has, in recent years, sternly repressed several attempts to introduce a moderate psychology into the writing of saintly biographies. This branch of the Church's literature is therefore not nearly so effective for ethical purposes as the great wealth of material would suggest. Nor is the Church moving quickly enough in the transformation of that other great branch of its literature—devotional or spiritual works. The classics of this department—the *City*

of God and the *Confessions* of Augustine, the *Imitation*, and so forth — will never cease to be read; though some which were once accounted immortal—the *Commentary on the Psalms* of Augustine (which Petrarch tells Boccaccio he read with rare pleasure), the works of St. Bernard and St. Bonaventure, and all the more mystic works—are retreating within an ever-contracting circle. Such works as those of St. Teresa will always have interest, but even St. Francis de Sales and Father Faber are growing distasteful to an increasing majority. Such books as the *Glories of Mary* (by St. Liguori) find innumerable critics; popular horrors of the type of Father Furniss's booklets are being stamped out. But even the actual writers of Catholic devotional works fail to attract a large proportion of their cultured laymen, and the amount of nonsense poured out is still considerable. In addition to these are commentaries on Scripture, volumes of sermons and "meditations," apologetic works, Catholic novels (I mean more of the type of Cardinal Newman's and Lady Fullerton's than the brilliant novels of Dr. Barry and Mrs. Craigie), biographies, polemics, theological works (few in English), translations of the Fathers (which very few read), and historical and liturgical works. A glance at the Catholic section in, say, Sonnenschein's *Best Books* will show the immensity of the literature.

Amongst this immense literature every class of

Catholics finds congenial reading. It is a fact, however, that the Church has no peculiarly effective machinery for distributing it. Books are rarely mentioned in the pulpit. The Catholic Press is trusted to advise the faithful in the matter of books, and it discharges its function with zeal. The Catholic journals, the most loyal Press in existence, are, in fact, the chief literary agency at the service of the Church. Many churches have libraries of Catholic literature attached, but I have never seen these institutions flourish. Probably the vast majority of fresh Catholic works, at least if we except controversial literature, find their way into presbyteries, monasteries, nunneries, and the homes of a certain type of well-to-do Catholic ladies. There is usually a Catholic bookseller close to the church, and the few Catholic publishers are well known. In fine I am disposed to think that this religious agency is comparatively neglected by the Church.

That the Church, however, exercises a negative control over the literary output is a familiar fact. The famous *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* receives many an addition in our own day, and its features and eccentricities have frequently been described. In Catholic countries the proscribed book cannot be read without the taint of mortal sin. In England it is rarely spoken of. This is partly in virtue of the general principle not to press a law when the chief effect would be to multiply formal transgression.

But the Catholic priest in England usually attains the same end in a less obtrusive and despotic manner. He frequently urges the principle on which the *Index* is based—that books directed against "faith or morals" cannot be read without sin. The individual sense usually detects such works, where the authors are not notorious enemies of the Church (like the present writer), and the priest must be consulted in case of doubt. In Protestant lands the Church dare not attempt more than to lay frequent stress on this principle.

I will be asked to what extent Catholics read the Bible. Evading the thorny controversy about the reading of the Bible in earlier times,[1] I must say they make comparatively little use of it to-day, when they are certainly free to do so. In the majority of Catholic homes you will find no Bible; in the great majority of the remainder it is not read. Passages from the New Testament are read from the pulpit on Sundays, and the preacher often enlarges on the beauty and helpfulness of the Scripture. There is

[1] Save for two observations. The Catholic contention is that it was the publication of discrepant versions and the promptness of heretics to pervert the text that compelled it to restrict the circulation of Scripture. There are instances where a controversy of importance to the theologian is decided by a tiny Greek word which differs ("and" or "or") in the Catholic and Protestant versions. Secondly, Hurter (*Compend. Theol.*, i. 195) claims that between the invention of printing and the revolt of Luther (a space of about seventy years) there appeared eight hundred whole or partial editions of Scripture, of which two hundred were in modern languages—eighteen in German.

not, however, a vigorous effort made to induce the people to read it; and without such effort they are little disposed to read it, as a rule. Protestant taunts are beginning to make a change in this respect, and this influence is supplemented by the spirit of the converts from the Church of England. But as yet the Catholic body is little moved in the matter.

In conclusion, I may recall a number of Catholic objects and practices which are added to these larger agencies in promoting the normal moral life. I have spoken of the wearing of Agnus Deis, scapulars, and medals, under the dress throughout the day. There is also a practice of wearing slender-knotted cords which have been blessed in honour of some saint. The Catholic is urged to carry his rosary-beads in his pocket. The Catholic home is incomplete without a few religious pictures, or a crucifix, or a statue of the Madonna or some other saint. In the bedrooms you will often find tiny stoups of holy-water, and perhaps a little altar or a *prie-Dieu*. All these are witnesses in one way or other to the ideal. Whatever their direct purpose, and whatever their intellectual or dogmatic aspect, they illustrate the effort of the Church to follow its children out into the ways of life and quicken unceasingly the impression conveyed by its Sunday services.

CHAPTER IX

REVIVAL EXERCISES

WE have now to consider a remarkable group of institutions by which the Church seeks to restrain the tendency to monotony which is inseparable from a fixed system of services. The reader will remember a brief excursus into psychology with which I introduced the question of the calendar. The current of life is ever descending into the worn nerve-channels of animal function. The cultivation of the spirit is neglected if an orderly scheme of service be not devised; it becomes perfunctory and lifeless and profitless once it has habituated itself to the automatic observance of a written code of duties. It is an entire error to suppose that the Catholic Church is content to receive such a perfunctory service and is more or less indifferent as to the spirit that quickens the external acts. It has devised a large number of institutions which are to act as periodic stimuli to the spiritual life—to disturb the smooth current of external religious life and make it sparkle again with the energy of a real devotion.

It will at once occur to the reader that the chapter on "The Calendar" exhibits a notable spiritual machinery of that character. The great feasts and fasts of the Church are ostensibly grounded on very varied motives. We may take them together here as a group of institutions for invading secular life with a claim of the supremacy of the ideal. This is clear enough as far as the festivals are concerned; and the observations I made in the chapter on asceticism should make it equally clear for the fasts. The ascetic element, in the older sense, has, as I said, almost entirely departed from these practices, yet they retain enough discomfort and rebuke of the animal nature to be effective reminders in the midst of the week's work of the constant nearness and claim of the religious ideal. The festivals usually fall upon Sundays, so that their spiritual effect is to break the monotony of the Sunday services and awaken the spirit that slumbers beneath the surface of mechanical observance. There are, however, festivals which have practically become greater than the Sunday, and the Church has little need to enforce them. Such are Good Friday and Christmas-day. Even the Free Churches are now thinking of abandoning the Puritan protest which has so long made them neglect the spiritual potency of these days. But in the Church of Rome there is another group of festivals which occur during the week, yet are raised to the position of a Sunday. These are the

Holidays (holy-days) of Obligation, which form one of the distinctive elements of the Roman life. Early in the life of the Church it was sought to counteract the secular tendency to restrict religion to one day in the week by introducing a number of other festivals in the calendar. But the majority, as is usual, confined their service to the obligatory attendance at Mass and wholly neglected the voluntary festivals. The Church therefore decreed that a large number of these festivals should have precisely the same status as the Sunday. No "servile" work was to be performed on them, and everyone was bound to assist at least at one Mass in the morning. In 1642 Urban VIII. drew up a list of no less than thirty-eight such festivals, so that few weeks passed without this special stimulus to devotion, this lordly invasion of the domain of secular life. In this, however, the papacy had overrated its power. Subsequent popes had to reduce the number of *festa ex præcepto*. At the present day the number varies in different countries, but never exceeds the proportion of one to each month. In Catholic countries these days are, as I have said, very generally observed. In England most Catholics contrive to assist at Mass in the early morning, but the prohibition of work is entirely suspended. Yet, even as it is, the Holiday of Obligation deserves to rank as one of the periodical stimuli which meet the danger of a mechanical discharge of religious duties.

Like the gastronomic restriction of the fast-day, the effort to attend Mass before rushing to office or workshop in the morning reminds the Catholic in a peculiar way of the supremacy of religion.

Urban VIII. included in his list "one of the chief patron saints of each kingdom or province, and one of the chief patrons of each city, town, or village, where such patrons chance to be venerated." No one who is acquainted with Catholic literature can fail to have noticed the force which these patronal celebrations had in the older Catholic world. They were, of course, an adaptation of older "pagan" practice, but one reads a curious illustration of the change in the life of St. Augustine. Before he became bishop of Hippo the Catholics of that town had been wont to celebrate the annual festival of their patron saint in the manner which had been immediately adopted from pagan usage—by feasting and very profane merry-making in the church. St. Augustine fell upon the practice, and after a brief oratorical struggle converted it into a purely spiritual celebration. Certainly the element of secular rejoicing has rarely been long excluded—though Augustine and Ambrose rooted out the banquets or *agapæ* which disfigured the Church-life of the fourth century; but in the main the patronal festival has since then been a spiritual celebration. In our own time the idea of the patron saint has less force than it had, at least in many of its applications. We find that our ancestors chose their

patrons with some recklessness. The St. Denis of France, as described in the breviary service, has suffered badly at the hands of even Catholic historians. What is left of St. George in England is hardly calculated to inflame the old ardour. St. Cecilia's patronage of music is found to rest on a curious misinterpretation; St. Luke's patronage of medicine on a very unsubstantial tradition; and so forth. One does, indeed, meet many a picturesque celebration of the patron saint of some Flemish or French or Italian provincial town, but on the whole the idea is now restricted to the better known saints who give their names to churches. Moreover, these titular festivals are now very generally reserved for the "Sunday within the octave" (the first Sunday after the real occurrence of the festival), as it is becoming increasingly difficult to convoke a fitting congregation on week-days. This institution has therefore lost most of its earlier force as an invasion of the secular life of the people, and is now chiefly notable only as a periodic infusion of life into the Sunday observance.

Then there are a few festivals of quite a peculiar character which call for a passing comment. I will take a typical festival—the Feast of the Portiuncula—to illustrate this small but very distinctive class. As a rule, the observer who would study the Roman system in its full and natural action must go to the more faithful districts of Belgium, or France, or Italy,

where a Protestant environment has not chilled the Catholic life, and restricted its growth and expression. But one finds many a curious and audacious expression of the Catholic spirit in Lancashire, where the traditions of mediæval England have never been entirely extinguished. Such are the famous processions of May Sunday and of Whit-week, when whole congregations march through the streets of Manchester and the other large towns in gay apparel, and with their confraternity devices and hundreds of banners and bands. Such, too, is the celebration of this Feast of the Portiuncula which I take by way of illustration. Nearly twenty years ago I used to see it each year at the beautiful Franciscan church at Manchester on the 1st and 2nd of August. For weeks previously posters had appeared over the town with the mystic term "Portiuncula" in large type; and on the morning of the 1st of August vast crowds of pious folk, mostly middle-aged or elderly women, descended upon our peaceful district. Stalls and booths, heavily laden with beads and images and other pious commodities, lined the entrance to the church, and sheltered under its walls. The good friars, with more hospitality than canonical propriety, threw open their spacious garden. And all day long the crowds poured in and out of the church, beads in hand; kneeling, perhaps, for not more than three minutes, then retiring from the church for a few minutes, and so on for hours together. At the close

of the day one could hear little groups comparing the numbers—sometimes running into hundreds—of the visits they had made during the festival.

The festival was a profound enigma to our non-Catholic neighbours; and in truth a very large number of those who crossed and recrossed the threshold of the church knew only, and that but vaguely, that they gained a "plenary indulgence" for every prayer said in a Franciscan church on that date. The curious festival is founded on a legend of the life of St. Francis of Assisi. It is related that the saint was assured in a dream by the Virgin that every man who prayed in sorrow and repentance in "the little chapel of the Portiuncula" (*i.e.* near the "little gate" of the town) would be relieved of his transgressions. St. Francis sought and obtained papal confirmation of this. In theological language the privilege meant that every man who prayed with proper disposition in the chapel of the Portiuncula on the 2nd of August would gain a plenary indulgence.[1] The privilege was later extended to all churches under the care of the Franciscan Order, so that the Feast of the Portiuncula became a world-wide celebration. It is apparent that such a celebra-

[1] Observe two things. A plenary indulgence does not, as I have previously explained, mean either a forgiveness of sin or a permission to commit sin; it is a remission—in the sense of the Latin *indulgere*, to remit—of the purgatorial punishment due to sin, for which absolution has been properly obtained. And, secondly, the Church insists that the proper moral disposition is essential.

tion, usually falling on a week-day, and supported by impressive sermons and ceremonies, must be counted an important institution of the class we are considering. One is naturally struck at first with the apparently mechanical idea of the people in this ceaseless entrance and egress from the church. Probably one would really find a good deal of this mechanical view and practice if one pressed the inquiry, but the important feature is this—the Church insists in every sermon and instruction on the subject that if the physical action of a visit and a prayer were repeated a thousand times, it would not obtain a single indulgence without the accompaniment of a genuine repentance and purpose of amendment. Regarded in the light of that teaching, constantly repeated as it is, the celebration must have a considerable ethical force. It exacts, of its very nature, a prolonged reflection on the shades of one's life and character.

I have taken this festival as an illustration of an exceptional class of Roman institutions, but it must be admitted both that the Feast of the Portiuncula is losing its force and its picturesque popularity, and that the class to which it belongs is very restricted. The privilege has of late years been extended to other churches, and has thus lost much of its imaginative power. Indulgences, too, are now so easily obtained that the old Franciscan privilege has become by comparison an onerous and unattractive

means of gaining one. The decadence is common to the small group of peculiar festivals to which it may be associated. They rely on olden legends and miraculous privileges, or the possession of notable relics or wonder-working statues, or some such prerogative. Here and there they still evoke religious demonstrations of a striking nature, but on the whole they only serve to remind us of the decay of the Church's power to break in when it pleases on the domain of Mammon.

But the chief agency which the Church has devised for shaking the spiritual torpor of its members, and which more properly merits the title of "revival exercises," is the mission. The mission is, as far as I can trace, peculiar to Christianity, though it is a spiritual procedure to be found in most of the Christian sects. It consists, like the more famous revival exercises of the Methodists, in the devotion of a whole week or fortnight (at least as regards the evenings) to highly pitched religious services. The sermons on the three Sundays of the mission fortnight are rhetorical and forcible discourses on fundamental truths of the Catholic faith, and on each of the intervening week-nights there is a lengthy and impressive service. The essence of the mission lies in the series of about fourteen sermons (the Saturdays being given up to hearing confessions), which run through the fortnight. For centuries these sermons have followed a familiar plan, and have dealt chiefly

with points of the Catholic eschatology. Thus, a missionary would open his proceedings with a sermon on the creation of man. He would pass on to the Fall, the Redemption, and the death of Christ. Sin, the Sacraments, the Mass, and other elemental dogmas would then be dealt with, and the preacher would lead his congregation through thoughts of death, judgment, purgatory, and hell, up to a final discourse on reconciliation, the Prodigal Son, and heaven. Such a scheme of sermons proves a very powerful oratorical instrument in the hands of a skilful missionary dealing with a specially prepared and expectant congregation. Moreover, these missionaries are picked and specially trained preachers, usually of the more austere monastic orders, who have abundant traditions of their work. They support the sermons by every device of liturgy that they find in the service of the Church—the Rosary, the Way of the Cross, the erection of huge crucifixes, and so forth.[1] They also ask the names of all the renegades and black sheep in the parish, and visit them at their homes. Scenes that almost recall the great mediæval outbursts, and that entirely equal the Wesleyan

[1] I remember a story which illustrates the dramatic devices of the missionary. A great Jesuit missionary announced his purpose of preaching on "What God has done for man and man for God." The whole hour was occupied with the first point, and he then put the question implied in the second. For reply he took up a candle, lit near him for the purpose, and by its light slowly and successively examined the wounds of the crucified figure beside him, and descended the pulpit without a word. The effect is said to have been remarkable.

demonstrations, are often witnessed at these missions. To see a whole congregation in tears before him is a familiar experience of the monastic missionary. Indeed, the strain is so intense on the missionaries themselves—there are generally two, if not three, employed in giving a mission—that the very strongest frequently break down under it.

It will be readily conceived that the mission is the most powerful moral agency at the disposition of the Church. The whole aim of the series of moving services is to enkindle a sense of sin and to effect a moral purification of a congregation. Once in every five years, or even more frequently, the priest calls in the aid of expert missionaries, most probably monks, and they bring the bulk of his congregation to church night after night for two weeks. It is true that the mission is itself undergoing a visible moral transformation. Modern missionaries, especially those of the more cultured type, or who have to appeal to more cultured congregations, depart freely from the old-fashioned models. The grim and terrible descriptions of the home of the damned, which once always formed the central event of the mission, are now only heard in the more ignorant circles. The spiritual ideas of hell and heaven are presented; the older materialism is almost entirely discarded. But the Catholic priest still talks unwaveringly of eternal punishment, and the familiar discourses on sin and death and judgment, supported by the familiar anec-

dotes and legends, are still heard. It is still usual also to close the mission with the impressive ceremony of "the renewal of the baptismal vows." On the last Saturday of the mission all are exhorted to confess—probably to make a general review of their lives since the last mission—and on the Sunday the sermons reascend to consoling aspects of religion—reconciliation, perseverance, heaven, etc. Finally, candles are distributed to the congregation, and at a given moment these are lighted and held in the hand, whilst the great congregation repeats aloud after the missionary a reaffirmation of the baptismal vows. I have explained (chap. iii.) how the Church has lost the symbolic force of the early baptismal ceremony by administering the Sacrament in unconscious infancy. It is in this renewal of the baptismal vows by the adult at the close of the mission that it recovers a great deal of the lost force. Deeply impressed with the sense of sin which it is the great object of the mission to inspire, the kneeling congregation usually ratifies with a visible fervour the oath of fidelity to the ideal which was made by proxy at baptism. The Church does not use the mission for dogmatic purposes, though the series may include a general sermon on faith or unbelief. Courses of sermons on Sunday evening are generally resorted to for the strengthening of belief and allegiance. The mission is a purely ethical device.[1]

[1] It is interesting to note that other idealist organisations, such as the Socialist body, have observed the efficacy of the mission and adapted it to their particular propaganda.

The retreat is a somewhat similar institution, but it demands the devotion of one's whole time to spiritual occupation for a week or ten days, and is therefore more properly a conventual practice. Not infrequently, however, the Catholic laity of exceptional leisure and fervour go to a monastery or convent for a week in order to follow the exercises of a retreat. A broad distinction between the retreat and the mission is at once apparent from the character of the priests who give them. The Jesuits are the priests most in demand for retreats; for missions the Franciscans and Redemptorists are considered more effective. The retreat is the finer spiritual instrument, and is adapted to a more refined and sensitive temper. The usual procedure is to eschew all secular employment and reading for a week or ten days,[1] and devote the greater part of the time to pious reading and meditation. The priest who conducts the retreat gives a discourse, broken by many and long pauses, two or three times each day, and each discourse is followed by an hour or so of silent reflection on the subject. Besides these "meditations" and the "spiritual reading," there is a prolonged daily ex-

[1] Though they do not fall within my present sphere, I may usefully note here the meaning of an *octave* and a *novena*. The octave is the period of eight days which follows a great festival—including the festival itself. The novena is a course of prayer undertaken for nine successive days for a special object. Ten days is the usual duration of a retreat; fourteen of a mission. There is also a *triduum*, or series of special services, for purposes of worship or of edification, during three consecutive days.

amination of conscience, or scrutiny of one's character and spiritual progress, frequent conferences with the director in the confessional, and many devotional practices. In the longer retreat conversation is permitted for an hour after dinner; in the shorter retreat it is entirely forbidden. The Jesuits have a particularly drastic form of the retreat, lasting a month, the scheme of which may be found in their literature. As a rule the sermons, or "meditations," of the retreat follow much the same order as those of the mission, but, being generally directed to a more refined class, they rarely reproduce the cruder features of missionary declamation. The retreat is a less dramatic and emotional procedure than the mission, but it is obviously a potent moral force in its own sphere.

Pursuing our inquiry into Catholic practices from the point of view of a provision of periodic stimuli to the religious spirit, we next encounter a number of isolated institutions which once had a very great power in this regard in the life of the Roman Church. There is the practice of the episcopal visitation of parishes, for instance. The principle of official visitation—a term which implies a visit with a purpose, though it does not necessarily connote the discomfort commonly associated with it—is very much used in the Roman Church. The monasteries of an order are periodically "visited" by a high official entitled a "visitator," who is sent out for the purpose from the

chief centre at Rome. Nunneries are also "visited" periodically. Confraternities of men and women associated with such bodies as the Franciscan Order are "visited" by a member of that order. The bishop has a similar duty to perform to the congregational units under his charge, and in earlier times, when the people could be summoned to the church on week-days with greater ease than is possible to-day—when the bell was a really useful commodity—the bishop's visit was an inspiring event. To-day it has little significance. In compliance with an invitation from the pulpit on the preceding Sunday, a number of the more leisured and better disposed women of the congregation assemble some morning in the church. The bishop makes a formal examination of the building and its appointments, addresses his small congregation for half an hour, and gives a peculiar form of Benediction with the Sacrament.

The hand of Time has been laid with no less destructive effect on the old-world institution of the pilgrimage. In Catholic countries one still witnesses many pilgrimages to the shrines of the Virgin, though (whether or no we accept M. Zola's analysis of such events) even there the practice is visibly decaying. In England the recent efforts to revive the old pilgrimages to Westminster or Canterbury do undoubtedly elicit a good deal of fervour—probably more than many a gorgeous Catholic pageant in France or Belgium—but they only mark the more

plainly the distance the world has travelled since the fifteenth century. To the east of Guildford one can trace with ease the path of the ancient pilgrims to Canterbury, and picture them plodding painfully along in their bare feet, with their stores and wallets, muttering the never-ending prayer. It is a very different picture from that described in our journals on the day following a modern "pilgrimage" to the shrine of St. Thomas. The modern pilgrimage to Rome must be excluded almost entirely from our ethical inquiry. In so far as it has a serious purpose and an appreciable effect, it belongs rather to the province of Church polity or of dogma than to ethical culture. The new pilgrimage is a new institution. The old-world pilgrimage, like the ruined abbey, attracts in its remoteness from life and its decay.

Nor can one speak very differently of the institution of the Jubilee Year. This was founded in ancient times on the model of the jubilee year of the Old Testament, and after many changes has been appointed to occur every twenty-fifth year.[1] There were two regulations which contributed to the spiritual renown of the Jubilee in the older days. No doubt even here one could find a considerable admixture of less sacred interest if one chose to dwell on that—*naturam expellas furcâ* etc. But there were two great spiritual features of the festival which appealed to

[1] The Mexicans held a Jubilee festival every fifty-two years.

mediæval piety. When the plenary indulgence of the Jubilee was declared, all other plenary indulgences were suspended, so that every eye was turned towards Rome; and exceptional privileges—such as absolution from reserved sins, from censures, commutation of vows, and so forth—were included in the Jubilee favours. Rome retained the unique position which this institution gave it as long as the piety of the world permitted, and impressive ceremonies added force to the pilgrimage to Rome. A certain door of St. Peter's is still reserved for the Jubilee celebrations. It is broken in at the opening of each Jubilee year, and walled up at the close for another quarter of a century. That such an institution had a strong religious influence, as well as it contributed to the prestige of Rome and the loyalty of the faithful, cannot be questioned. One has only to study the old chronicles at Jubilee times. Many causes have contributed to the decay of its renown in our day. Modern facilities for travelling have, curiously enough, magnified the notion of a pilgrimage in the religious mind. Few will now make even the pecuniary sacrifice. The indulgences have had to be dissociated from the journey to Rome, and made available everywhere. But the indulgence has now become so common, and is so easily gained, that all the older and more difficult and picturesque ways of obtaining it are falling into disfavour; and it cannot be denied that the average modern Catholic has less eagerness

to gain indulgences than his fathers had.[1] The Jubilee, as it survives to-day, is rather a device for fostering what is called "the Catholic spirit" than an ethical institution.

The next class of Roman institutions to which I need refer in this connection have little more vitality in our day than the preceding. These are the "censures" which once played an important part in the moral life of individuals and the fortunes of nations, and which have indeed proved an element of no slight importance in the history of Christian Europe. For fully a thousand years—from the sixth century to the sixteenth—excommunication and interdict figure conspicuously in the chronicles of England, France, Germany, and the other Christian nations. For many centuries these ecclesiastical censures were the only agency that could restrain the passion and despotism of the barbaric successors of the Goths and Vandals. Few princes and nobles could long remain indifferent to the dramatic assurance of eternal damnation that was conveyed in the sentence of excommunication; few peoples were not cowed into submission by the impressive closing of their churches under the force of the interdict. One can well measure the immense and irrecoverable distance the world has travelled since those days by

[1] I should add to my earlier explanation of the indulgence that it is usually transferable to some soul in Purgatory. Hence, in part, the anxiety to multiply indulgences. In Spain a plenary indulgence is obtainable anywhere for 7½*d.*

the pathetic efforts which the Church makes in our time to wield those huge weapons of the mediæval Titan. Some time ago a London congregation espoused the cause of its pastor in a dispute with the cardinal-archbishop. Their church was laid under an interdict. The priest immediately opened a rival chapel, to which most of the congregation resorted; the rest found the customary consolation in neighbouring churches. Some time ago, too, a distinguished scientist inaugurated a rationalistic campaign within the Church. He was excommunicated; but the pale and timid fulmination was calculated to excite any emotion save that of terror in the clear sky of the nineteenth century. The position in Italy, where hundreds of good Catholics live in tranquil possession of what are held to be *bona ecclesiastica,* illustrates the same truth. The whole voluminous treatise *de censuris* in theology and canon law is all but obsolete, though the Church trusts, no doubt, that the days may return when they can again be put into force. At present it very rarely passes formal sentence of excommunication. The individual is left to excommunicate himself. But there are a number of sentences of excommunication which are incurred *ipso facto*, in the language of canon law; they are incurred as soon as a man performs the action for which they are threatened, without any formal declaration of the sentence. These are continually incurred in our time, as in the case of apostasy. Yet

the Church dare not attempt to enforce its regulations, and forbid the faithful under pain of sin to communicate with the delinquent. Priests, and even bishops, not infrequently maintain a friendly intercourse with ex-priests and ex-nuns of earlier acquaintance. The one kind of censure that is still effective is the "suspension." This is a punishment of a priest for graver delinquencies, and it is still a very common implement of clerical discipline in the hands of a bishop, though the laity know little of it. The term needs little explanation; the priest is forbidden to exercise certain or all of his priestly functions at the discretion of the imposer.

It is hardly profitable to enter into the detailed workings of these censures to-day. They are no longer important agencies in the moral and religious life of the Church. Their effectiveness in the mediæval world cannot indeed be questioned. Apart from the ethical aspect of the power they secured to the priest—a moral problem which lies outside my present purview—their fulmination from Rome, and the heavy roll of their thunder through the provinces, came to the people in town and village as vivid reminders of religious interests. They have practically ceased to be ethical agencies, giving a periodic stimulus to the spiritual life; they are now little more than methods of ecclesiastical discipline.

There was a time, too, when the exorcism counted as an agency of the character we are considering.

I do not mean simply that the occurrence of a case of "possession" or "obsession," and the ceremony of expulsion that followed, stirred up the current of religious life in a mediæval town; though this is in itself an indirect service. The exorcism, and all ritual and practice connected with the belief in evil spirits, have taken on in the course of time a peculiarly ethical significance. Just as the idea of God has become predominantly ethical in the higher religions—hence the ethical import of the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence—so the idea of the devil has gradually taken colour (or denial of colour) from the same ideal. The modern Catholic Church clings to the idea of an evil spirit in almost complete indifference to the decay of the notion in other Churches. But it now conceives the devil almost exclusively as a contra-ethical agency, the tempter, the supreme embodiment of immoral suggestion. In earlier ages, when the gods of a vanquished people or a superseded religion were turned conveniently into devils, they were made odious by the charge of causing most of the material damage done in the community. It became necessary, by a curious rebound, to "speak the devil fair," and bribe him to refrain; as the Chinaman, whose devil is a very materialist person, does to-day, and as some of us do when we scatter rice for his consumption at a wedding. With the rise to supremacy of the ethical ideal in the religious world, the devil

transferred his interest from the physical to the moral world. In such countries as Ireland, where supernatural agency is still seen in each obscure movement, the elves and spirits that work material havoc are usually taken to be a distinct genus. Now that the Catholic world has ceased even to attribute the disorder of bodily and mental powers to diabolic agency, it may be said that the idea has been wholly etherialised.

Now, however much we should prefer to locate the sources of evil in more tangible and remediable agencies, it is clear that this new conception lends an interest to exorcisms and similar practices from our ethical point of view. To identify immoral suggestion with all that is traditionally most repulsive and inimical is a device of some significance, and one that imparts an ethical quality to all the rites and practices that seek to expel or repel the tempter. In truth, however, the Church is ceasing to use external rites for this purpose. The exorcism is now rarely practised. I have known a few instances in the large towns of Ireland, and even in London, within the last quarter of a century, but the majority of the clergy are now very sceptical about cases of possession, whether of a man's person or tenement. In its less public rites the Church still largely practises exorcism, as in blessing water, salt, candles, and other objects for ceremonial use. The prayers explicitly avow their purpose of expelling

evil spirits from these elements, though certainly not one priest in a hundred seriously considers the proceeding necessary or advisable. In the baptism of infants the liturgy still retains a great deal of the elaborate exorcising that was thought so important in the childhood of the race; now even the symbolism of this is lost, since it is all said in Latin. These are a few survivals of a practice that must once have been an effective agency for stirring up the religious life of the community. The exorcist has long ago ceased to be a distinct official. Every cleric passes through that "minor order" on his way to the higher consecration, but he is hurried on to the next "order" during the same ceremony; in any case, the Church has now reserved to the priest the power to exorcise, under certain conditions, and it is rarely exerted. The generous use of holy (*i.e.* exorcised) water in the Roman Church is another anti-diabolic institution. Probably few modern Romanists even think of evil spirits when they dip the tips of their fingers in the stoup and cross themselves with a drop or two of the water; and the church-going hat of the modern lady has greatly restricted the practice of sprinkling the congregation at large. There is more spirit in the use of it where pious folk take it to their homes, though in such cases the prospect of advantage is more material.

On the whole, the belief in the devil persists very

remarkably in the Church of Rome, but the means of repelling him have been no less refined by modern thought than the conception of his operation. The horned and grotesque monster that only occasionally ventured into the light of day has given place to an invisible spirit of refined malice who is never absent. He must be foiled and repelled by prayer and a good disposition, and by enlisting the opposing zeal of one's guardian angel. But this quaint conception of oneself as the object of a continuous moral struggle helps to keep the spirit alert, however much it may complicate or obscure the real problem.

In this section of the Roman ethical structure, therefore, we find ourselves in a world of decay. Amongst the many devices with which the Church has met the tendency to monotony and automatism in the religious life few retain much vitality and usefulness in our day. Of these the mission and the retreat are the most prominent and potent. There can be no doubt that, unless the world of the future is to approximate to the creations of Mr. H. G. Wells, these devices will be retained. These are, however, of their nature agencies that must be employed at wide intervals. They need the support of some such intermittent agency as is provided in the calendar, the mid-week festivals, and the "holidays of obligation" of the Roman discipline.

CHAPTER X

THE IDEAL OF THE MONK

THE second stage of the ethical structure which is embodied in the Roman system is the monastic life. The monastic world is not, indeed, separated from that of the laity by the spacious interval which many imagine. Moral and spiritual aspiration does not increase by sharply severed stages, but by an insensible elevation; and the Church is careful to adapt its discipline to the inner growth. The Buddhist religion graduates its commandments, recognising a higher class of the laity between the ordinary people and the monks and clergy. It would seem at first as if the Catholic Church had failed to observe the truth which Buddhism so clearly appreciates, but I have already spoken of congregations of lay people which form a link between the world and the cloister. The rules of such bodies as the Third Order of St. Francis or St. Dominic and the Little Oratory of St. Philip correspond to the middle commands of the Buddhist decalogue. One passes by easy steps through these to the less austere religious congrega-

tions, and ascends gradually to the heights of the Trappist and Cistercian Orders. *Natura non facit saltum*, the old philosophers used to say; and grace, says the theologian, accommodates its action to the ways of human nature.

It will probably occur to the student of Catholic life to ask whether the monastic or the sacerdotal state is held to be the higher. If there is one feature that may be considered to mark off somewhat sharply the second stage of ethical culture in the Church of Rome it is the vow of celibacy. There are, for instance, members of the Franciscan Third Order who leave the world and adopt their rule as the ground of a cenobitic life, adding a vow of celibacy. In common Catholic opinion these are as definitely distinguished from the married members as are any other monks and nuns; though they may bear the name of "lay" brothers and sisters. Both priest and monk take this important vow, and are separated by it even from the more devout of the laity. In point of fact, Catholic writers and theologians are divided into very hostile groups over the question of the relative superiority of the monastic or the priestly condition. It need hardly be said that most of the priests are on one side and most of the monks on the other. The relation between the two branches of the higher spiritual order is rarely cordial or edifying, and their respective theologians engage in warm controversy. Cardinal Manning's *Eternal Priesthood* is

a document of the milder type on the sacerdotal side; monastic literature abounds with strong statements of the opposing thesis. The theologians who betray least feeling in the matter generally conclude that the priesthood confers a higher objective dignity upon the recipient, but that the monastic ideal implies an inner and personal sanctity of a higher order. In any case we may associate the two as branches of the higher stage of spiritual culture. And as we have already discussed the priesthood, we may turn our attention to the monastic world.

Few are unaware to-day that the monastic ideal is by no means peculiar to the Catholic world. It is said that one of the great monastic orders, that of the Carmelites, cherishes a tradition of a foundation in the remote days of the prophet Elias. At any rate Josephus has made us familiar with a really monastic order, the Essenes, that lived in poverty (or communal ownership) and celibacy on the eastern frontier of Judæa before the time of Christ. The followers of Pythagoras had lived in semi-monastic communities many centuries earlier. In fact we find the monastic impulse making its appearance at much lower stages of religious life. Réville's work on "the non-civilised religions" gives us many curious traces of the nascent spirit. Amongst such widely distant races as the North American Indians, the African negroes, and the Polynesian natives, there are select religious associations. They impose severe tests of

self-command and perseverance on those who seek membership, and when these are initiated they are considered to be of a higher order and in a closer relation with the spirits than the ordinary people. In the higher religions in India, Persia, Arabia, Judæa, Greece, and Egypt the monastic spirit almost invariably appears, but we find a most curious approximation to the Catholic monasticism in the middle or "barbaric" religions of China and ancient Mexico. In China the Buddhist and Taoist religions have called into existence thousands of monasteries of mendicant, barefooted friars, who chant their psalms and tell their beads in singular likeness to their unknown European fellows. In Mexico there was a great variety of monasteries and nunneries. There were mendicant orders and vegetarian orders (or "herb-eaters"), and isolated hermits. Both monks and nuns engaged in teaching, as they do in Europe, and were bound by a stringent vow of celibacy; the nun who violated her vow was buried alive, like the faithless Vestal Virgin at Rome. When we find these celibate nuns conducting large boarding-schools, rising at night to tend the light before the altar, sewing and embroidering for the priests and temples, and making the dough cakes and images for the communion—the characteristic occupations of Catholic nuns—we can scarcely hesitate to recognise the touch of nature that has made them so near akin to the nuns of Europe.

It would be a departure from my purpose to examine the opinion which would find Buddhist influence in the monasticism of the Essenes, and Essenian influence in the Christian monasticism of Egypt in the third century. Before the middle of the fourth century St. Athanasius had introduced the monastic life into Italy, and St. Augustine and other prelates gave a strong impulse to its development. Augustine had, indeed, felt a longing for a communal life even before his conversion to Christianity, and had endeavoured to form a cenobitic establishment on philosophic lines with his Afro-Roman friends at Milan. The project had been wrecked by their disagreement as to the feminine element. When they had embraced Christianity this obstacle was removed, and he and his friends formed a celibate and sober-living community, though without vows or formal profession, at Thagaste. The Augustinian way of life, described by him in a letter which became "the rule of St. Augustine," was generally adopted by the communities of the west during the following centuries. But Augustine had been moderate in his asceticism; and when the Christian faith had sunk deep into the mind of Europe, and the Augustinian monasteries exhibited a far from uniform piety, there sprang up a feeling for a sterner isolation from the world. This was met by the founding of the Benedictine Order, whose great abbeys sheltered the cultured and refined during the

iron age that followed. Then, as corruption dissolved the rigour of the Benedictine life, the sterner feeling sought expression in new orders—the Trappist, the Cistercian, the Premonstratensian, with their many internal reforms and sections. The thirteenth century witnessed a fresh development in the founding of the Orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic. St. Francis, his biographers say, did not take his inspiration from the older orders, but directly from the New Testament. In the fashion of his age he opened the Gospel at random when the vague craving for a higher life disturbed his soul, and he chanced to light on the passage where Christ instructs a youth who comes to him with just such a request. He read a counsel of voluntary poverty and self-denial, and the manner of life in which he embodied that counsel became the "rule" of his followers. In the thirteenth century there appeared also a new principle which tended to multiply monastic forms. St. Francis raised the question of the direct usefulness of monastic bodies to the world. He concluded that his brethren should spend half their time in self-sanctification and half in impressing their own ardour on the people. The raising of this question of function suggested a great variety of orders, which appeared in the course of the following centuries. St. Dominic founded his Order of Preachers (usually styled the Dominicans) to meet the encroaching heresies as well as the worldly spirit of his time. St.

Ignatius formed the Society of Jesus for the instruction of the young. St. Vincent de Paul directed his followers to social and philanthropic work. St. Philip Neri and St. Charles Borromeo suggested the ideal of a body that should be ascetic enough to exert an influence which the secular priest commonly lacked, yet not so remote from life as the monks proclaimed themselves. A third principle of multiplication appeared in the cult of special devotions, which I have mentioned previously. Hence arose the later congregations (for from the Jesuits onwards these bodies are not technically known as monastic orders) of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Fathers of the Assumption, the Oblates of the Sacred Heart, the Passionists, the Redemptorists, the Servites (or Servants of Mary), the Barnabites, and the Fathers of Charity.

There are few conceivable phases of ascetic or spiritual feeling that cannot find a home in one or other of these orders and congregations, which the Church readily took under its sanction and tutelage. And the congregations of women followed everywhere in the train of the masculine foundations. Most of the monastic bodies have instituted orders for women with the same, or a slightly modified, rule. In cases, as in that of the Franciscans and the Poor Clares (the First and Second Order of St. Francis), the feminine branch of the order is the more rigorous of the two, and less frequently falls into decay. In

the third and latest category of religious congregations we find an amazing variety of bodies with special functions to the community or special cults to honour. The Catholic "Directory" will inform the reader where these congregations are to be visited in England, and the "Catholic Dictionary" will afford a sufficient indication of their history and purposes. It is impossible to do more here than note a few general features in addition to the root-idea of the conventual or monastic life.[1]

The one constant feature of these bodies is, in ecclesiastical language, the embracing of "the Evangelical counsels" of voluntary poverty, perpetual chastity, and obedience. The counsel of poverty recurs on every page of the Gospels, and the practice of celibacy is more than once commended. Even the theological interpreter does not easily find a counsel of obedience, but it needed little experience of the cenobitic life to discover the necessity of adding a vow of obedience to the other two. Celibacy, communal ownership, and some degree of asceticism, are

[1] Catholics do not use very strictly the many terms which apply to cenobitic institutions. Roman Catholics in England like to call female institutions "convents," but the Church embraces houses both of men and women under that title. "Nunnery" is the only accurate term, but Catholics choose to see an element of offence in it. An "abbey" is a house of the older orders, which applied the eastern title of "abbot" to their superiors; "monastery" is used of all the orders down to the Dominican; "priory" is applied to a Dominican house, "friary" to a Franciscan, "convent" to all, of either sex, from the thirteenth century.

therefore the characters of the monastic ideal, and these are embraced as a lifelong obligation in the triple vow which constitutes the "profession" of the monk or nun.[1] Variety is found chiefly in the graduation of the ascetic principle in the different bodies, and the difference in their practical aims. The difference in costumes, which is so picturesque a feature of a great ecclesiastical function, is a mere accident of birth, recalling the different ages and nationalities in which they arose. As a rule the founder of a monastic order chose no fantastic costume. He merely adopted the costume of the poor of his age and country, only demanding poverty or sobriety (according to their ascetic temper) in the dress of his followers. But identity of costume was found too valuable a link to be lightly set aside, besides that the growing archæological and picturesque value brought in time some comfort to human nature under the sacrifice. The conservatism

[1] The apparent exceptions will be found to belong to bodies that are not properly monastic or conventual. On the Continent, for instance, one finds cenobitic bodies, such as the Beguins in Belgium, where a moderate discipline is maintained without vows, and where the inmates come and go at will. In monasteries one finds serving-brothers who merely take vows of obedience and chastity for the term of their sojourn in the monastery—a period they may terminate when they choose. These brothers are really lay-men, or members of "third" orders, and they have not a complete monastic dress. People are also misled at times by hearing that monks "renew" their vows. This is a purely spiritual function, and does not mean that the vows had ceased to bind.

was also partly due to an undiscriminating resolve to imitate the founder. At one time the two great branches of the Franciscan Order waged an historic war over the length of the hood of their founder, and they were divided by that controversy until a few years ago. And the Church finds too great a liturgical value in the costumes to remind the orders that their zeal for the letter has led them to depart from the spirit of their founders' instructions.

The ethical value of these congregations is clearly dependent to a large extent on the conditions of admission, and here one finds a change entirely proportionate to the change in the general temper of the world. St. Augustine, who saw monasteries spring up with astonishing rapidity about him, insisted that no conditions should be laid down. Every man who knocked at the door of the monastery was to be admitted at once, whether or no the officials of the monastery found in him a sincere and religious intention. Even when he saw abuses on every side, as he bitterly complains in his *De Opere Monachorum*, he would not qualify this desire. In the course of time it was resolved to make a trial of the intentions of an aspirant by a year (sometimes two) of noviceship. Later still the applicant had to bring proofs of character and fervour with him, even before he was admitted to the year of trial. To-day, in most orders, he has to give satisfaction on such points as the health and sanity and respectability

of his parents in addition to furnishing proofs of a religious spirit, intelligence, and a fair education.

But whilst the Church has increased the obligation to inquire into the disposition of monastic aspirants, it has relaxed its discipline in a most important particular. It is well known that in periods of decay wealthy abbeys have received children into their cloister, and made monks of them long before they reached the age of discretion. As a rule, however, the applicant for the monastic habit was a man of mature years, a man who knew this world which he was solemnly to forswear. St. Francis warmly protested against the evil practice of admitting boys into monasteries. In our day the majority of those who take the religious vows are youths of sixteen or seventeen, and even these have largely been educated in monastic colleges and schools. To understand the paradox of this increasing stringency as to qualifications and relaxation on the point of age one has to appreciate the decrease in applications for the life of the cloister. With all its eagerness to maintain the standard of conventual life the Church has had to face this shrinkage and the menace it involved. The monastic communities have had to go out into the world and inspire "vocations" where they found youths of promising disposition. There was a natural tendency to seek the younger and more impressionable, and the Church was forced to control the procedure. It directed that youths and girls might be

admitted to noviceship at the age of fifteen, and to "profession" at the age of sixteen. But it enacted that these early vows were soluble; they might be undone by local authorities who found they had made a mistake in admitting an applicant, or they might be dissolved by papal authority at the request of the young neophyte.

During the year of noviceship the young monk is confined to devotional work and light religious studies. The convent, or wing of a convent, in which the novices live is carefully isolated, to guard against evil example from the older friars, and the rule of the order is severely maintained in it. Their daily occupation entirely recalls mediæval life—strict silence (save for one hour a day), constant prayer, a little manual labour, and the study of ecclesiastical and monastic regulations. A selected priest is appointed as their "instructor," or novice-master, and (in the Franciscan and some other orders) a secret vote of the whole community is taken every three months as to the advisability of passing each neophyte into the congregation. The novices take their meals and attend the public devotions with such older friars as live in the house—usually a select number—so that the voters have good opportunity to study them. After the final votes, and favourable reports from the master of novices and the medical man, they are admitted to the ceremony of profession. The profession of a man or woman of mature years is an

imposing spectacle, but the chief figure of the modern profession is so frequently a mere boy or girl that one follows it with some feeling of pity. It is the signing of a blank document, on which nature may write a terrible burden in the years to come. The maturity of mind and body, which alone can give a real solemnity to such an act, is often retarded beyond the usual age by the monastic education. It must be understood, however, that the sterner orders do not admit these immature youths. The Carthusian monastery at Parkminster, like the famous Grande Chartreuse, remains in its solitude, and the world-weary must go to it and make their vows before its silent altars with no witnesses but a score or two of like-minded men. The stricter orders of women act otherwise. I have known girls of thirteen to join the Poor Clares, one of the severest orders, and take the vows at an early age. In some convents the ritual of the profession has a dramatic grandeur, where the age of the nun does not turn it into tragedy. The nun lies extended on the floor of the chapel in the attitude of death, and is shrouded with the veil that is to be her sepulchre during the few years of reluctant life that will follow.

It is not entirely unnecessary even in our day to say that the bond which keeps the monk or nun to the convent is a moral one. The one or two authentic instances of physical detention in monasteries or nunneries which I know of would be heard with no less

incredulity in monastic circles than amongst the Catholic laity. They do, indeed, point to the possibility of occasional irregularities; and it is not inconceivable that superioresses of nunneries, who are so often ladies of narrow experience and excessive zeal, would in cases make unduly vigorous efforts to prevent young nuns under their charge from, as they would conceive it, imperilling their eternal safety by quitting the convent. It must be understood that the canon law on the subject remains unchanged, and the Church does not offer any other reason than political conditions for allowing it to lie inactive; and that law fully and emphatically enjoins the physical detention of apostates, or would-be apostates. These circumstances must prepare us for occasional irregularities, but I greatly doubt if they are numerous. I do not believe three nuns would leave the convents of England if they were thrown wide open to-morrow to officious inspectors and warm-hearted Protestant ladies. The bond is, as I said, a spiritual one. If the "simple" vows are followed, at an interval of three years, by a "solemn" or irrevocable ratification, the monk or nun is bound by a grave obligation in conscience, as long as he or she retains the Catholic faith which inspired the vows, to remain in the convent.

In the orders of men this usually takes place, so that the spiritual link is made indissoluble at the age of nineteen or twenty. The Church professes to have

the power to dissolve even these vows (the Pope being the Vicar or Vice-gerent of Christ), but it has only exerted it twice in the course of its history. The only change possible for the monk is to pass to a severer order, or (with power from Rome) to pass into the ranks of the secular clergy, in which case his vows of poverty and obedience are cancelled. For the nun who has taken the solemn vows there is only one honourable path from the convent — the path to the cemetery; though, of course, a change of belief may render void the original contract, for contract the profession really is. The truth is, however, that our English nuns, at all events, do not generally take solemn vows at all. The Church does not encourage the taking of solemn vows where the strict canonical inclosure cannot be enforced; and in England only a milder, or "episcopal," inclosure can be imposed, since our unbelieving Government could send in a male official whenever it found or imagined cause. Hence nearly all the nuns in England are bound only by simple or "dispensable" vows. In theory they can always obtain a dispensation from these; in practice I do not know of a single case where this dispensation has been asked, certain as it is that they sometimes would retrace their steps if they could. The defect must be attributed to the unfortunate attitude of the Catholic laity; they would give a cold welcome to the young woman who returned from the convent to the world, even by this

legitimate path. The same unfortunate feeling does not exist as far as monks with simple vows are concerned.

The second point to which the ethical inquirer will direct his attention is the manner of life and the spiritual discipline which are found in the monastery and nunnery. Here, naturally, a field of forbidding breadth opens itself out to our inquiry. Not merely the costume, but also distinct ascetic and spiritual practices, separate the numerous orders and congregations. Perhaps the best way to proceed will be to group the bodies into three classes according to the severity of their acceptance of the ascetic principle. A more familiar division would be that of active and contemplative bodies; but the great majority would now have to be located in the former group. It must also be borne in mind that the life of the various bodies is considerably modified by their environment, so that they exhibit very different features in a Catholic and a non-Catholic country. In England and the United States, where the number of the secular clergy is hardly adequate to meet the ordinary needs of the Church, the bishops usually force the monks to undertake parochial work in their dioceses. This circumstance, and the restrictions which the Protestant environment imposes on their external conduct, reduce very considerably the distinctive features of the orders, and tend to bring them to a common level—a level which is raised little above that of the ordinary clergy.

And, indeed, if we take a large number of the more recent and less ascetic of the religious bodies as our first group, the distinction from the secular clergy is inconsiderable. The life of a community of Oratorians, Oblates, Fathers of Charity, Vincentians, Assumptionists, Servites, or Jesuits, is little removed from that of a group of secular priests living in community under their rector. The Jesuits make a vow of individual, though not collective poverty, but it may be said that the feature of voluntary poverty hardly enters into the life of the group at all. The first three congregations merely add an element of spiritual socialism and a few ascetic practices to the ordinary duties of the priest, and acknowledge a graceful and not very onerous obedience to a superior. In the two following the discipline and the self-denial become more pronounced. The Jesuit Society is famed for its discipline and the obedience it exacts, but the Jesuit houses are usually not unpleasant bachelor residences, and the ascetic element has little prominence in their habits. In England these bodies differ inappreciably, in life and occupation (except for the giving of retreats and the leisure afforded for literary work), from the secular clergy. In Catholic countries the advantage of their life seems to be that their social aggregation affords more time and more incentive than the ordinary *curé* has for mental and spiritual culture, so that their share in the sanctification of others should prove more effective. In a word

—and this is the significance of the group—they represent the purer action of the social or cenobitic instinct in religion, without much admixture of the ascetic element. They have been created by the craving for fellowship in the higher life.[1]

In a second group I would place the Passionist congregation, and the Franciscan, Dominican, Benedictine, and Carmelite orders. Here again we have bodies of men who seek aid in the pursuit of a higher standard of life, and through this in influencing the world, by a social prosecution of religious ideals. The first three might be accounted active, and the other two contemplative bodies; but no one who is acquainted with them as they live to-day would press the distinction. Their chief distinguishing features are an enlargement of the practice of common devotional exercises and a higher degree of austerity. All of them chant in choir the "office" which is found in the breviary of every priest. This accounts for two or three hours of the day; and the mass, meditation, and other forms of prayer, generally bring up the time spent in spiritual work to some six hours or more each day. All have a law of silence—more honoured in the breach than the observance—which

[1] Some surprise may be felt that I assign the very distinctive body of the Jesuits to this group. But their claim to be the *legio tonans* of the Church rests chiefly on a system of discipline which makes rather for their corporate and external than their individual and inner interests. The Redemptorists, a much less cultured body, might be put in either this or the following group.

forbids all conversation except during one hour after dinner. All take the discipline (scourge), and add many fast-days to those enjoined by the Church; the Dominican fathers never take meat, or speak in their refectory. All have sandalled feet and shaven heads, coarse garments, rough beds without linen, and a system of penances, or public humiliations, which the superior imposes at will. Their several characteristics are found in their costumes and in minor details of their asceticism and their devotions.

I have elsewhere[1] described in full detail the monastic life as it is exhibited in Franciscan monasteries, but possibly a brief sketch of such daily life will be expected here. Let us imagine ourselves in the dormitory (upper corridor) of some large Franciscan friary abroad, a little before midnight. The friars have retired about nine o'clock to their cells, or sleeping and living rooms. At a quarter to twelve the brother "excitator" passes from door to door with his wooden mallet and a pious salutation, and in a few seconds the prompter of the brethern are making for the common lavatorium, towel in hand. Beneath his loose and picturesque habit the friar wears a close-fitting tunic of somewhat less coarse brown cloth; in this he sleeps on his straw bed at night. At midnight the bell gives its last warning and the laggard hurry to the choir (before

[1] *Twelve Years in a Monastery* (out of print) and especially *Life in a Modern Monastery* (Grant Richards).

or behind the chief altar), where the superior opens the "office"; defaulters will do public penance at dinner for their indulgence. After an hour's chant the friars retire to bed once more. At four the excitator makes his second round, and two hours or more are spent in the choir (in chanting, meditation, and saying or hearing mass) before a sober and silent breakfast (a bowl of coffee and bread and butter *ad libitum*) is taken in the refectory, the *Imitation* being read aloud meanwhile. This is followed by another twenty minutes' chanting, and then the friars are left to their individual occupations —study, reading, preparation of sermons or retreats, hearing confessions, receiving visitors, and perhaps (a less legitimate occupation) paying visits outside. At 11.15 the bell summons all to the choir, where they chant the last part of the morning office, and spend another half-hour in meditation (for which a few points are always read from a spiritual book). The plain, substantial midday meal is taken in silence, except on high festivals, to the accompaniment of a reading from Scripture and the lives of the saints. It is followed by a brief visit to the chapel, and on three days each week by a gathering in the "chapter-room" for public confession of disciplinary faults and an exhortation and penance from the superior. The hour of recreation is usually spent in conversation (or skittles, dominoes, etc.), and is followed by the chant of vespers and compline. With the ex-

ception of a quarter of an hour that is devoted to conversation over their beer, the rest of the afternoon is spent in the same way as the morning hours. At half-past six the third meditation is announced, and supper (beer and cold meat or cheese) is taken in silence at seven. The discipline takes place after supper on three evenings each week, and all then repair to the choir for evening prayers, examination of conscience, and the superior's blessing. The remaining hour is taken up with the private or voluntary devotions (Rosary, Way of the Cross, etc.) which every good friar adds to the obligatory list, or with spiritual reading. By nine the convent is buried in silence, and all lights in the cells must be extinguished.[1]

The Franciscan life may well be taken as typical of this group of monastic orders. There are, it is clear, two questionable features in that life from the ethical point of view. It is wholly impossible for any but a fervent few to keep the mind usefully attentive during six hours of prayer; and the question of occupation must nearly always present difficulties. In England and the United States, where the monks depart from their canonical status by taking charge of parishes, the difficulty is largely met. The monks have the occupation of the

[1] In England the monks do not usually rise till five, but apart from that the inner life of the monastery is as I have described, unless the community is very small and the parochial work exacting.

ordinary clergyman in addition to their domestic exercises. Where the canonical status of the monks —which requires independence of parochial work— is assured, it is assumed that, following the spirit of St. Francis and the other founders, they will spend half their time in self-sanctification and half in giving missions, sermons, and other aid to the parochial clergy. Where this work is proportioned to the number of monks there is no difficulty about occupation. The alternate week or the alternate month is easily absorbed in the monastery. Where the number of friars is in excess of the work demanded of them the time is apt to be frittered away in an idleness or a trivial occupation that reacts on the whole spiritual life.

In the third class I would place the orders of the Trappists and Cistercians. Here again the difficulty of finding useful and congenial occupation arises. Indeed, as these orders cut themselves off entirely from the world, the difficulty would seem even greater. But the spiritual exercises are proportionately lengthened. The daily "office" of the breviary, which the secular priest reads to himself in an hour and a half, and the monk of the second class "psalmodies" (chants in a monotone) in three, occupies five or six hours in the weird and curious chant of the Cistercian. He has really only a few hours to fill up in the solitude of his little cottage, and these he occupies—though he probably wishes the day only

consisted of twenty hours instead of twenty-four—in reading, writing, or manual labour. A law of perpetual silence (somewhat modified in England) even cuts him off from his fellows, whilst he has turned his back as effectually on the world and its interests as if he already slept in the little garden in the centre of the great quadrangle. His daily food is simple and his fasts severe. His one thought is to purify his soul of the last breath of passion or sin before he bears it to the great tribunal. At the most he can but pray for the world that seethes beyond the high walls of his abbey.[1]

I need not now discuss at any length the monastic orders and religious congregations of women. They differ from the communities of men chiefly in occupation; in that and in their degree of austerity they also differ from each other. There are orders where the life offers little discomfort, and orders (such as the Poor Clares) where it is marked by a most severe asceticism; orders that aim at social usefulness by teaching or philanthropic work, and orders that have an ideal only of self-sanctification. Most of them recite the office which the priests are bound to say daily, and add several hours of meditation, pious reading, and private devotions. The occupation of

[1] I have met people (non-Catholic) who question if a community of deeply earnest men like the Cistercians, or women like the Poor Clares, may not exert a spiritual influence *telepathically* on the world about them.

the majority of the nuns is not unknown—the educational and charitable work of the nuns of St. Ursula, the Sacred Heart, the Good Shepherd, the Sisters of Charity and of Nazareth, and so forth. Where this kind of work is not undertaken the nuns are engaged in sewing, embroidery, the making of vestments and altar-breads, and the like. There are few congregations of nuns where the question of occupation becomes a serious problem.

But the question of chief interest to the ethical observer is that of the methods and devices by which the religious spirit is sustained in the monastic life. "Because thou art neither hot nor cold I will vomit thee out of my mouth" is one of the most frequently quoted texts in the monastic world. Whatever may be thought of the past, the monks and nuns of our day are not, as a rule, so inflamed with ambition to realise the higher ideal that their superiors have only to control their actions. We must remember the age at which they usually enter the cloister to-day and the many reasons other than purely spiritual ardour that may influence them at times. Each order, therefore, has its system of stimuli to devotion, and we may note a few of the more general features of these schemes. They are all agreed, as we saw, in spending many hours a day—from five to eight or nine hours—in religious devotions. Much of this time is spent in the recital of somewhat monotonous prayers, and therefore pertains to the domain of

worship, rather than of ethics. Then there is the daily Mass and almost daily Communion, in which we have recognised an ethical value. The daily recital of the Rosary (not an obligatory, but a usual practice) hardly concerns us, but the daily following of the Way of the Cross is more pertinent. The chief feature of the daily life is, however, the two or three "meditations," each lasting half an hour (sometimes longer), which occur at different times of the day. Reflections on some point of the moral life or of the Christian faith are read to the community, as they sit in the stalls of the choir, and they then kneel with averted faces, or faces buried in their hands, and pursue these reflections in silence for half an hour, ending with practical application to their own lives. This is one of the most potent devices of the religious life, and it is supplemented by the careful inquiry each evening into one's behaviour throughout the day. The public reading of the *Imitation*, the Bible, the lives of the saints, and other religious works, is another important institution, and the public reading during meals is followed up, as a rule, by private reading.

The weekly confession, which usually means an intimate conference with a spiritual director, is an agency of some importance, but there is a curious monastic custom, called the "chapter," which is less known. As it is held, three times a week, in the Franciscan Order, the chapter means the gathering

of the friars in one of the rooms of the monastery for confession, admonition, and prayer. The friars sit round the room, and the superior opens with a reprimand of any faults he has noticed amongst his community. All then kneel down, kiss the ground, and make an act of penitence for their faults in general. Any who have broken crockery, or overslept themselves, or been guilty of any other breach of discipline, accuse themselves in detail and receive penance—usually a prayer.[1] All then join in prayer for various persons and purposes, and the friars disperse.

But the principal institution for resisting the tendency to spiritual monotony is the annual retreat. I have already described how this consists in devoting a week exclusively to spiritual exercises—prolonged meditations, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, and religious devotions. These exercises are a most powerful agency for reanimating the spiritual ambition of the monk and nun, and no convent or monastery neglects to have one every year; those who are absent at the time must go through the exercises by themselves afterwards. And a further device that I have already alluded to is the

[1] For oversleeping the friar would have to kneel in the refectory at dinner and pray with outstretched arms until the superior bids him arise; for disobedience he would have to eat his dinner on the ground; for an aggravated act bread and water must be his fare. Severer punishments were: confinement to the monastery, prolonged fasts, retreats, suspension, and excommunication.

"visitation." Every three years the chief house of the Franciscan Order at Rome—and the practice is common to many of the religious bodies—sends a high official of the order to "visit" each province, or national branch. The "visitator" goes to each convent in the province, and conducts a minute inquiry into its affairs. He sees each member of the community, down to the youngest student, in strict privacy. Thus not a single defect can escape his notice. The young betray in their zeal the negligence of easy-going superiors; the devout tell of relaxations of discipline; the studious accuse the idle and ignorant; and the superiors close the inquiry with a discursive report on the community which has preceded them in the dreaded room. This inquiry may occupy a week in a large monastery, the absolute secrecy of the proceedings ensuring complete candour. The visitator then studies and condenses his voluminous notes, and addresses a discourse to the assembled friars which rarely fails to hit off the shortcomings of the community. It is an uneasy but a wholesome time.

By these means the monk or nun is sustained at a degree of fervour which reconciles them to the comparative sacrifices of the conventual life. But it seems entirely pertinent to my inquiry, if not directly incumbent on me, to add that this whole mechanism has only a moderate and a sporadic efficiency. When it is remembered that the great majority of the in-

mates of convents now enter them in their teens, before they can know their own moral strength and mature resolve, I will not be pressed for too nice an estimate of modern monastic life as a whole; if indeed one could give such an appreciation without bringing involuntary injustice on the many monks and nuns who still follow the conventual practices with a deep devotion. I have heard theologians contend that the Christian religion would be justified in sight of God and men if it had raised one soul to a high holiness. The monastic system has succeeded in perfecting character to a wonderful degree in countless instances. But the warning which Christ gave ages ago, and which His followers too often ignore, "Many are called, but few are chosen [elect]," holds of the monastic world no less than of the body of the laity. The average monk is not a man of superior character. The few elect are dispersed amongst multitudes of men and women of a very common clay. The practice of binding oneself by life-vows (taken, at the best, in a moment of fervour) to an austere scheme of life is most assuredly condemned by its record. The present conditions of the practice only lessen its vitality, although they usually prevent the grosser subterfuges of the older time.

I was taught in the monastery that the Vatican Council of 1870 had proposed to reduce the religious congregations to four definite types. I know no documentary evidence for this, but the story is not

without significance. Those types would probably be — one of the severer orders, two of what I have classed as middle orders, and one of the less ascetic congregations. It is not improbable that in the course of time the middle orders will be abandoned, and only the extreme types remain. Every moralist will look to the eventual abandonment of life-vows and of ascetic practices (as distinct from a disciplinary sobriety of life). But the cenobitic instinct will live for all conceivable time in those who seek to cultivate a more tranquil and refined life than daily contact with the world permits. There will always be a tendency for such to withdraw from the street and the market-place, and cultivate—frequently in bachelor or spinster communities—their ideal of life. The more cynical, the more weary, and the more disappointed, will build the *chartreuses* of the future. The others will have cultured homes not unlike those of the present Oratorian or Jesuit.

CHAPTER XI

THE ROLL OF THE CANONISED

THE third and highest section of the Catholic world is represented by those whose names are inscribed, or will one day be inscribed, on "the canon of the saints." The ethical value of this practice of enrolling the nobler and more elevated characters in the Church in the body of supreme distinction is readily perceived. At the very summit of the Catholic scheme the saints are ever, by their dazzling reward and the glamour of their lives, stimulating spiritual ambition amongst those who are toiling through its ordinary discipline. Whether priest, monk, or layman, the Catholic is constantly reminded that this august circle is open to him. The theologian does, it is true, claim that the saints would not be what they are if it were not for "special graces." But this Augustinian doctrine is easily evaded in practice; these "graces" will never be refused where the higher purpose of will is found. The sphere of the canonised is a democratic province. Whosoever will may gain the aureole and the higher throne and

the undying veneration of peoples. No one who is acquainted with the better sides of Catholic life will question that this ideal proves a notable incentive to moral and spiritual ambition.

Naturally, the formation of this body of the elect did not from the first aim at this high ethical service. The honouring of the saints was a utilitarian practice in the beginning, and still retains that character in a predominant degree. Catholic theology has built upon thedoctrine of a future life the dogma of "the communion of saints." It teaches that death does not sever the link that unites mind with mind, but rather strengthens it. It holds that the blessed in heaven (the Church Triumphant) are in living touch with the strugglers on earth (the Church Militant) and the souls in purgatory (the Church Suffering). Much ingenuity has been expended in the investigation of this relation—though it usually results in a figurative assurance that the divine mind is a perfect mirror of all life and thought of finite things, and the saints contemplate this in their "beatific vision"—but it is a dogma of the Church that the relation exists. The Catholic must believe that the dead saints are somehow conscious of his prayers and petitions, and have a mediatory power with God. The belief is (especially in its vagueness) an intellectual improvement on the ancestor-worship of the Chinese or the still older animism, but it has the same practical outcome. To the saints the

Catholic must look for the furthering of the innumerable petitions which he dare not directly proffer to the offended deity. The communion of saints has, therefore, a very large practical aspect. And it appears at once to be a matter of some moment to know with confidence whether a particular man or woman is really in heaven or not—is really competent to further the petitions of mortals. Once more demand created supply. The people, by their anxiety, virtually conferred on the Church the faculty to pronounce whether a given person deceased was in heaven or no. The Church does not indeed claim an infallible guidance in each particular case,[1] but its decisions are clothed with a solemnity that excludes hesitation. Thus there arose a canon, or official list, of those whose holiness procured an immediate entrance into paradise after death. Canonisation is merely this official assurance on the part of the papacy that the new "saint" has escaped purgatory, and is in a position to intercede for the faithful.[2]

Another practical need that led to the formation

[1] The majority of theologians affirm this, but the belief is not enforced as *de fide*.

[2] The Catholic belief is that all ordinary Christians pass at death to a state (not a *place*) called purgatory, where the stains which remain even after absolution from sin are cleansed. Fire is so familiar a purifying agency that purgatory was naturally conceived as a prison of flame; but there is no strict obligation to-day to admit the agency of fire in hell or purgatory. The saint is one of so holy and penitential a life that the stains of his sins have been purged during life, or by martyrdom, and he passes straight to heaven.

of a canon was the uncertainty about honouring saints and their relics. In the early Church much confusion was introduced with this practice. St. Augustine sternly protested against it altogether in his earlier Christian days (in his *De Vera Religione*). The famous Donatist schism was due in no small part to a rebuke given by the Bishop of Carthage to a rich lady of his congregation, who used to venerate and kiss the lips of a very questionable "martyr." At one time Buddha was insidiously brought into the roll of the Christian elect. At another, through a curious confusion, a Donatist schismatic who had committed suicide became (and still is) a Christian saint. A good number of pagan deities or heroes crept into the popular list of "saints." Such confusion was inevitable in those chaotic days, once the practice of veneration had been permitted. But with the rise of the hierarchy there emerged an official power to determine the true saint and the true martyr. A universal demand for relics, and no small traffic in them, had sprung up. The Church was bound to exercise some control in the matter, and in time, dropping the early custom of taking the people into its counsels, it developed an autocratic power of arranging the canon. In our time it is strictly forbidden to introduce into the liturgy any man or woman, however saintly he or she may be accounted locally, who has not been solemnly "beatified" or "canonised" at Rome.

It was quite in keeping with its transcendental character that the Church should choose a preternatural test of sanctity. The Church, it must be understood, does not claim any special revelation from above as to the status in the next world—the real question at issue in canonisation, as I explained—of the person whose holiness is pressed upon it. It does and must claim that, from its general claim of an indwelling Holy Spirit, it has some degree of supernal guidance in the giving of its final decision. But the substance of its claim is merely that its organisation enables it to deal more judiciously and impartially than a local Church could with a claim to sanctity. So frankly does it recognise the naturalness of its own power and the difficulty of the problem that it refuses to be moved solely by human arguments. Only when a sign has been given from heaven will it declare the candidate entitled to canonisation. There are, indeed, commanding figures in the canon who would never have gained admission under the stringent test of accomplishing at least three miracles (in life or after death); St. Augustine was only awarded the credit of two slender miracles by his admiring contemporaries. There are, on the other hand, according to some Catholic writers (as Mr. Kegan Paul), heretics who are entitled to a place in the canon on the same test of sanctity. However that may be, the Church has insisted for many centuries on this supernatural proof of sanctity, and

has constructed a formidable tribunal for the application of the test.

It is not until the tenth century that we find a papal canonisation. The Bishop of Rome had been consulted, it is true, in earlier cases, but it was not until 993, when a German saint was canonised by John XVI., that a central tribunal was formally recognised. With the progress of centralisation consultations became more frequent, and in 1170 Alexander III. reserved to the Roman see the power of canonising. For several centuries afterwards, however, other bishops and local synods asserted their right from time to time, until Urban VIII. put an end to this by his stringent decrees of 1625 and 1634. He strictly forbade the cult of saints who were not on the Roman canon, and laid down minute regulations for the testing of the alleged miracles and heroic sanctity; though he made indulgent exceptions in favour of older saints.[1] To-day the Roman tribunal has an unquestioned monopoly, and the process of examination which it conducts is remarkably prolix and legal in form. Benedict XIV. (then Cardinal Lambertini) has described the process in detail in his famous and voluminous work, *De Beatificatione and Canonizatione Sanctorum*, and the Oratorian fathers have made the section of this which refers to the test of sanctity accessible to English readers in a translation with the title of *Heroic Sanctity*.

[1] Saints or *beati* who enter the canon by this easier gate are said to have an "equipollent" sanctification or beatification.

The first condition of a normal canonisation is that fifty years must elapse after the death of the "saint" before the question of examination can be raised. The generation which knew him must be out of the way, with all their attachments and prejudices, before his character will be discussed. There are exceptions to this rule, however. St. Antony of Padua, for instance, one of the most charming saints of the thirteenth century, was canonised after legal inquiry within a year of his death, a prodigious number of miracles being proved to the satisfaction of the episcopal judges. In the normal procedure the local inquiry which forms the first step must not begin until half a century has elapsed. If the inquiry ends to the satisfaction of the local prelates, as it usually does, the documents are forwarded to the Congregation of Rites at the Vatican, where they must lie for another ten years. At the end of that period a first inquiry is made, somewhat analogous to the inquiry in which our lower courts decide whether or no there is a "true bill" in a criminal case. The "promoter of the faith," who is popularly known as "the devil's advocate," keeps a critical eye on the case, which is presented by a "postulator of the cause" nominated by the interested diocese or province. If the case is successfully "introduced," the candidate is entitled to the description of "Venerable," an honour which proves final in a large number of cases. The trial then begins in earnest. Two points must be estab-

lished in favour of the deceased; he must have performed at least three miracles, and he must have given human evidence of the practice of "heroic virtue," especially of the theological (faith, hope, and charity) and the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance). Both postulator and promoter have their lawyers and their medical witnesses (as to the miracles), and the cause may be protracted for years and cost an incalculable sum. Modern science is handled with cold professional skill by the devil's advocate and his assistants, and cancers and tumours are discussed for weeks together. If the postulator succeeds, the deceased is granted the title of "Blessed," and the diocese or province he belongs to is allowed a certain cultus in his honour. Beyond this step of "beatification" few advance in our time, for the promoter must prove the occurrence of at least two miracles *after* the beatification before the Pope will proceed to canonise. If such further miracles can be established, the Pope proceeds to the gorgeous function of solemn canonisation and extends the cultus to the entire Church.[1]

[1] The curious reader will find the documents of a modern process of beatification in the last volume of Moigno's *Splendeurs de la Foi.* These records of a nineteenth-century trial fill a huge octavo volume. When Cardinal Manning pressed for the honouring of the English martyrs of the Reformation period, thirty-three (including Father Garnet) were thrown out, and only an "equipollent beatification" was secured for those who were admitted. On the other hand, a peculiarity of the evidence is revealed by the circumstance that it forced the Romans to add a "martyr" whom the English Catholic scholars had not thought fit to present.

With this insistence on a miraculous test we are not concerned. The Spinozaist attack on miracles, so much repeated in the nineteenth century, is entirely (and, I think, rightly) unconvincing to the modern Catholic, with his pronounced dualism of God and nature. Believing in a God who made the world, the Catholic is not unnaturally disposed to expect His intervention in answer to prayer. Huxley's sounder contention that the limits of natural law are hard to determine, is a more serious modifying force, but there is still a great promptness in the average Catholic to admit a miracle. It is probable that the Church will long continue to exact this qualification for canonisation. And the more strictly ethical tests which the Church applies have the defects which we have already noted in the Catholic ideal. The Catholic canonisation improves upon that of the Buddhist or of the Mohammedan religions—the only two other religions in which anything like a formal canon is found—in refusing to press as a qualification the faculty for dreamy and mystic speculation which those religions seem to prize. If the proposed saint has written any works, these are submitted to a careful scrutiny, but otherwise there is no inquiry into his knowledge, even of spiritual things. Yet the moral standard by which this heroic sanctity is judged is scarcely acceptable to the humanist. In the first place, although one can appreciate the fidelity to conviction and ideal

that is usually involved in martyrdom, this is by no means a satisfactory token in itself of moral heroism. Without entering upon a psychological analysis of the disposition of many an aureoled martyr, it cannot, on any normal standard of virtue, outweigh the merit of the man who has patiently struggled with a defective temperament or an unfavourable environment for thirty or forty years. The act has been taken too mechanically and with too little discrimination. However, this is a matter rather of past discipline. With another very important test of the Roman system—love of God—we cannot occupy ourselves here; but it may be pointed out that this supreme qualification (for it is by far the most exalted virtue in the Catholic ethical scheme) may be best acquired where, as in strict convents or hermitages, there is little real test of character. Then there is the ascetic test, which cannot be regarded as permanent. The infliction of severe penances on oneself does indeed reveal a proportionate strength of purpose and generosity of devotion, but the ideal is a perverse one. Even in some of the more recent candidates for canonisation there has been an undue stress on this quality. The Blessed John Baptist Vianney was particularly lauded for an attempt he made to live on grass; the Blessed Benedict Joseph Labré was praised for, not only his practice of living by mendicancy, but also a certain deliberate filthiness of person by which he sought

to mortify himself. These are features of its ideal which the Church of Rome will doubtless quietly abandon in the days to come. Apart from them the test of "heroic sanctity" holds good, and Rome presents hundreds of types of character which any ethical organisation may well envy. It is often objected that the moral code which the Roman Church preaches is almost entirely negative. That is an exaggeration, even as far as it concerns the ordinary laity. The Church insists no less on the active virtues, such as kindness, than on the negative precepts of its decalogue. But in this higher part of its structure the moral ideal becomes almost wholly positive. The type of a St. Vincent de Paul is no less sacred to it than that of a St. Thomas Aquinas or a St. Antony of Egypt.

But, however imperfect the Roman process of canonisation may be, there can be no question of remissness in extracting the full ethical service from the possession of so illustrious a canon. Carlyle has said that the worth of a people may be appreciated by the way in which it "does its hero-worship." However little we may be disposed to accept Carlyle's theory of moral aristocracy in general, it has some claim to consideration in the religious world. And the Church of Rome has, from the fourth century onward, done its hero-worship with a conspicuous energy. The cult of the saints is one of its most distinctive features. One cannot, of

course, accuse the Protestant Churches of remissness in their exclusion of this cult; they resist it on principle. We have here the last phase of that singular quarrel which we have found to separate the Protestant and the Catholic body throughout. The institution which is claimed to have a high moral and spiritual efficacy in the Church of Rome is rejected as demoralising and destructive of spiritual life by the Protestant Churches. The finest characters on the one side are just as appreciative as the finest characters on the other side are disdainful and censorious. The Protestant, from his "Kitchener Street Church" or "Austerlitz Avenue Chapel," looks with pity upon the "St. Paul's" or "St. Vincent's" of his neighbour. It is again a question of whether the practice diverts the soul from God or no. The Catholic practice is indistinguishable from polytheism in the eyes of a number of quite sincere critics. The Mohammedan religion has witnessed similar controversies. The Buddhist religion, officially indifferent as it is to theistic questions, has developed its saint-worship in comparative freedom.

I will only repeat, in connection with this point, that I doubt if the Catholic feeling and practice are properly understood by the Protestant critic. No one will quarrel with the official teaching of the Church in this matter. It distinguishes (as may be learned from its "penny catechism") between *dulia*, *hyper-dulia*, and *latria* worship. The Protestant is

apt to resent the term "worship," and the Catholic is not infrequently heard to repudiate it. It is the official language of the Church, which takes it to mean the rendering of honour or reverence, either to God or mortal. *Latria* worship is "adoration," and must be rendered to God alone. *Dulia* and *hyper-dulia* involve no recognition of infinity or supremacy; they are rendered to the saints and the Virgin. It is thus seen that the Church puts the essential test of idolatry in the ascription of infinity or supremacy to the finite being who is worshipped. That sounds academic, no doubt, but it is difficult to devise a more satisfactory criterion. To make the test a psychological one and examine closely into the intensity of the worship rendered is not only an impracticable proposal, but would bring much innocent hero-worship and human affection under the charge of idolatry. The Protestant critic is too intent on this emotional feature to appreciate the very broad distinction which even the ignorant Catholic mentally draws between his worship of God and of a saint. I have seen much saint-worship, not only in England, but in the South of Ireland and in Belgium and France, yet do not think there is any appreciable quantity of what a theologian could fairly call idolatry or polytheism. However, the quarrel is largely one of terms, and does not concern us. On the one hand the Catholic should allow that the worship paid to the saints or the Virgin is often as

intense and as ceremonious as that paid to God; on the other hand, the Protestant will never—or only in very rare and negligeable cases—find any tendency to forget the dependence and humanity of the saint.[1]

When the Protestant realises that it is not a question of deifying saints, but whether it may not be possible to render public honour to them without conceiving them as gods, there will probably be a reaction on the older Puritan feeling. Certainly one cannot doubt the ethical force of thus honouring the memories and making much of the lives of the saints. There is something morbid in the feeling that shrinks with so much horror from any approach to the Catholic practice. The Positivists have set an example in the matter that is likely to be followed.

And since the Church has controlled and developed this cult of the illustrious dead for some fourteen centuries, it will be interesting to examine the practical discipline by which it applies this influence. We have encountered already many phases of that discipline, but it is well to consider it as a whole. There is, in the first place, the practice of naming Catholic

[1] One further word of explanation. It is objected that the Church introduced saint-worship in the fourth century in order to meet the habits and feelings of the converted pagans. This is very largely, though not entirely, true; St. Augustine, for instance, advanced by a purely spiritual development from his early opposition to "the cult of dead men" to a notable feeling for the cult of saints and their relics. But in any case the Church adopted the practice with a difference that cannot be overlooked. It insisted on the absolute dependence of these saints on God and their unalterable humanity.

children after a saint, and thus providing them with a model and a patron for life. The Church does not refuse to baptise unless this condition is complied with, but the priest looks with disfavour on the Lilys and Leslies that are presented at the font, and urges the older Christian practice wherever he can. A second name is taken by the Catholic child at Confirmation, and this is invariably the name of one of the more prominent saints. As is known, it is also the custom of monks and nuns to abandon their surnames on taking the vows (a symbol of their renunciation of the world) and adopt the name of a saint. The same principle is found in the naming of churches and in the assigning of patrons to the various guilds and confraternities into which the children, especially, are gathered. And this practice is supported by the observance of the Catholic calendar. Each saint has his day in the calendar—though the minor celebrities are reduced to a mere "commemoration" through the excess of festivals over days—and the feasts are usually read from the pulpit on Sundays. Some of the more prominent saint-days, such as that of the apostles Peter and Paul, are Holidays of Obligation; and a special sermon on their merits is usually added to the evening celebration. The preacher is always glad to find a concrete subject in the life of a saint whose festival occurs during the week, and the need of variety brings even the obscurer saints into notice. Patronal

festivals, centenaries, dedications of churches (a rare occurrence in England, since they must be free from debt to be dedicated), and other ceremonies help to keep the saints' lives before the people.

It is, however, chiefly in the generous use of pictures and statues and the veneration of relics that the Church presents distinctive features. In the case of statues and pictures it is difficult to see more than a temporary protest against abuse that has hardened into a prejudice in the anti-Catholic feeling. In fact, once the principle of honouring the saints is admitted, they become indispensable. The untrained imagination cannot picture the saint, however frequently he may occur in the liturgy, unless it has these external aids. And here also one must recognise a certain exaggeration in the Protestant complaint. The Catholic is no more tempted to attribute an intrinsic holiness to the statue or the picture than to forget the essentially dependent and finite character of the saints. He never forgets that, as his small catechism has told him from his earliest years, the cult of images is relative. There is, of course, a very plausible ground for the Protestant contention, repeated, as it is, by so many sincere and conscientious observers. The Catholic peasantry often cherish an image with a fervour and directness which one may well conceive to be absolute, and therefore idolatrous, in the theological phrase. There are in Catholic countries images of the Virgin which have been

venerated for many centuries, and which are believed to be a medium of the operation of innumerable miracles. The veneration of countless generations has actually conferred a curative power upon these images and the atmosphere of their chapels. Whatever theory of these cures we embrace, they certainly occur; and the reverence of the worshippers at such shrines naturally tends to attach itself in some measure to the image itself. But, once more, our inquiry should be directed rather to the mental attitude than the emotions of the worshippers. They never attribute to it a virtue independent of the saint it represents, or of the deity from whom the saint has begged these miraculous favours.[1]

Whatever may be thought of the Protestant iconoclasm, with its scriptural and theological grounds, the moralist will hardly quarrel with this part of the Roman discipline. The carved and gilded saints that smile on the worshippers in the Catholic chapel are a beneficent influence. They are an important agency in the elaborate scheme for sowing discontent in the minds of the lawless and quickening the ambition of the good. Moreover, the Catholic is

[1] So with another curious and misleading practice of simple Catholics. I have known communities of nuns to pray to St. Joseph, or some other saint, to obtain a fine day for their pupils' excursion, and when the weather turned out bad to put the statue of that grave and venerable saint in the rain for a few hours. The Chinese are said to act similarly with statues of their gods, exposing them to the blistering sun when the prayer for rain proves unavailing. In neither case is there the least notion of attributing sentience to the statue.

exhorted to set up such pictures and statues in his home, though this practice languishes amongst the Catholics of our day. I have often been struck by a curious exhibition of one consequence of the Reformation in our National Gallery. You pass through room after room containing the Italian and Spanish collections, and the higher ideal of life shines on you from a thousand Madonnas and holy families and writhing martyrs and radiant saints. They were painted in a world from which the religious ideal could not be excluded at any point. Then you pass into the Dutch gallery, and forthwith you tumble to earth, and wander in a world of beer-houses, and kitchens, and farmyards. I am not losing sight of the fact that the moral atmosphere in which Botticelli or Velasquez painted was not superior to that in which the Dutch painters lived. The subject is a complex one. But, as a matter of Church discipline and religious activity, one cannot but find instruction in the contrast. The Catholic aim is to maintain the religious ideal at every turn of secular life. It finds one of the most effective means of accomplishing this in the use of crucifixes, statues, and pictures. It erects huge crucifixes on the summits of hills, and sets them up by the wayside. You cannot pass through a Catholic village without your attention being caught by a few gay and inartistic little shrines, set into the gables of the houses, before which the peasant raises his hat as he goes along. Inside the

cottages you find numbers of statues and images on the walls, and probably tiny altars in the bedrooms. The wife and the daughter wear crucifixes at their breasts. The children run out to meet the pastor or monk who passes, and beg a few of the little pictures of saints and Madonnas that circulate by the million amongst Catholics. Opposite every Catholic church, even in England, you find a "Catholic repository," where brown St. Antonys, and green St. Patricks, and white St. Dominics, and all the rest, are purchased by the people, together with their rosary beads and crucifixes and pious literature. One fails to see the ethical gain of eradicating these practices.[1]

The cult of relics cannot be said to commend itself as readily to the modern moralist. Though it involves no direct censure of the principle, it is necessary to observe that the Catholic world is still flooded with disputable, if not palpably spurious, relics. Even the greatest saints of the fourth century were appallingly remiss in admitting relics. The

[1] Sincere as it is, the Protestant detestation of these "Popish baubles" is not without a certain humour to the disinterested observer. As I write, a journal comes to hand in which it is reported that a Catholic landowner in the North of England had erected a large crucifix (a simple reminder of the central fact of the Christian religion) on his property, but facing the highway, and the Protestant District Council was discussing the outrage with terrible solemnity. At a recent conference of the Church Association a zealous minister delivered himself as follows, anent this emblem of Christianity: "Beware of the image of the cross. Don't have it anywhere about your houses, either in form or picture. Wherever you see that sign you may be sure that idolatry is coming in or has come in."

story of St. Ambrose's discovery in his church at Milan is well known; and when St. Augustine accepted the "relics of St. Stephen," he silenced all caution with the words: "Let no one dispute. The will of God requires faith, not questions." The monasteries of the Middle Ages became laboratories in which the grossest frauds were perpetrated; one has only to think of the repulsive "relics" of Christ and His Mother that were exhibited all over Europe (and at Rome) and the hundredfold multiplication of the same "relics." This is, happily, ancient history,[1] but it is nevertheless true that very many of the relics now venerated in Catholic churches descend from these earlier days. The Buddhist religion, which also promotes the cult of relics, has suffered a similar degradation. But even when we approach the principle in itself, most of us will find it to possess little attraction as it is embodied in the Catholic discipline. We respect the remains of our dead friends. We may even venerate the ashes of the illustrious dead. But the extent to which the Church of Rome pushes that principle of veneration can only find some justification in its own peculiar theology.

Finally, the Catholic Church seeks to derive a

[1] As far as the grosser performances are concerned, that is to say. Some years ago I met a priest who was (indirectly) selling pieces of the soutane of the Blessed John Baptist Vianney, with full episcopal sanction. It was obvious to us clerics that these were no more than pieces of cloth that had, at the most, touched the "relics" of that saintly priest.

spiritual force from its saints by an elaborate biographical literature. Nearly every day the priest reads in his breviary a condensed sketch of the life of the saint whose festival occurs. Cheap biographical sketches of most of the saints are issued by the Catholic Truth Society. Catholic writers are continually pouring out new "lives." I have already explained that the Catholic discipline fails very largely in this connection. The modern Catholic family does not read Alban Butler. The cultured Catholic finds little congenial reading in this vast literature. It is a period of transition, as I have said. The older hagiography, with its crude psychology and its reckless multiplication of miracles, repels the informed and thoughtful reader. The Church is reluctant to part with its venerable legends, and still more reluctant to admit the psychologist into the sacred inclosure. The result is a momentary decay of the practice of reading the lives of the saints. Before another century is out there will be a humanist collection of the lives of the saints, and the educated Catholic will cease to screen his saintly biographies from the eyes of his visitors.

And in those days we too will honour the saints of the Catholic canon. From a work recently published by the Catholic body, in which a number of converts describe their religious experiences, it appears that a considerable number of Anglicans are annually attracted to Rome by its unique ex-

hibition of saintly characters. It is a curious outcome of the sectarian spirit that one should feel compelled to join the Church of Rome through admiration of its saints. We may venerate Socrates and Plato without a moment's thought of returning to the social and intellectual conditions in which they lived. We seem to have a truer insight when we restrain the sectarian feeling and pick out our heroes at will from the canons of all religions and idealisms; when we see an aureole round the head of Buddha and Confucius no less surely than round that of Paul or Augustine; when we recognise high character in the Anglican Church and outside of all Churches, no less than in the Church of Rome. Then we may discriminate, and not feel ourselves compelled to see sanctity in the cultivation of personal uncleanliness, or mendicancy, or self-maceration, or flight from the world. In every age and clime and religion we shall single out those who heroically achieve the ideal of their day, and honour their memories and cultivate their strength. But we will not forget that the world is older and wiser than when they looked out on it. They lived in the twilight of thought, however perfectly they caught the dim rays. We live at least a little nearer to the light.

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